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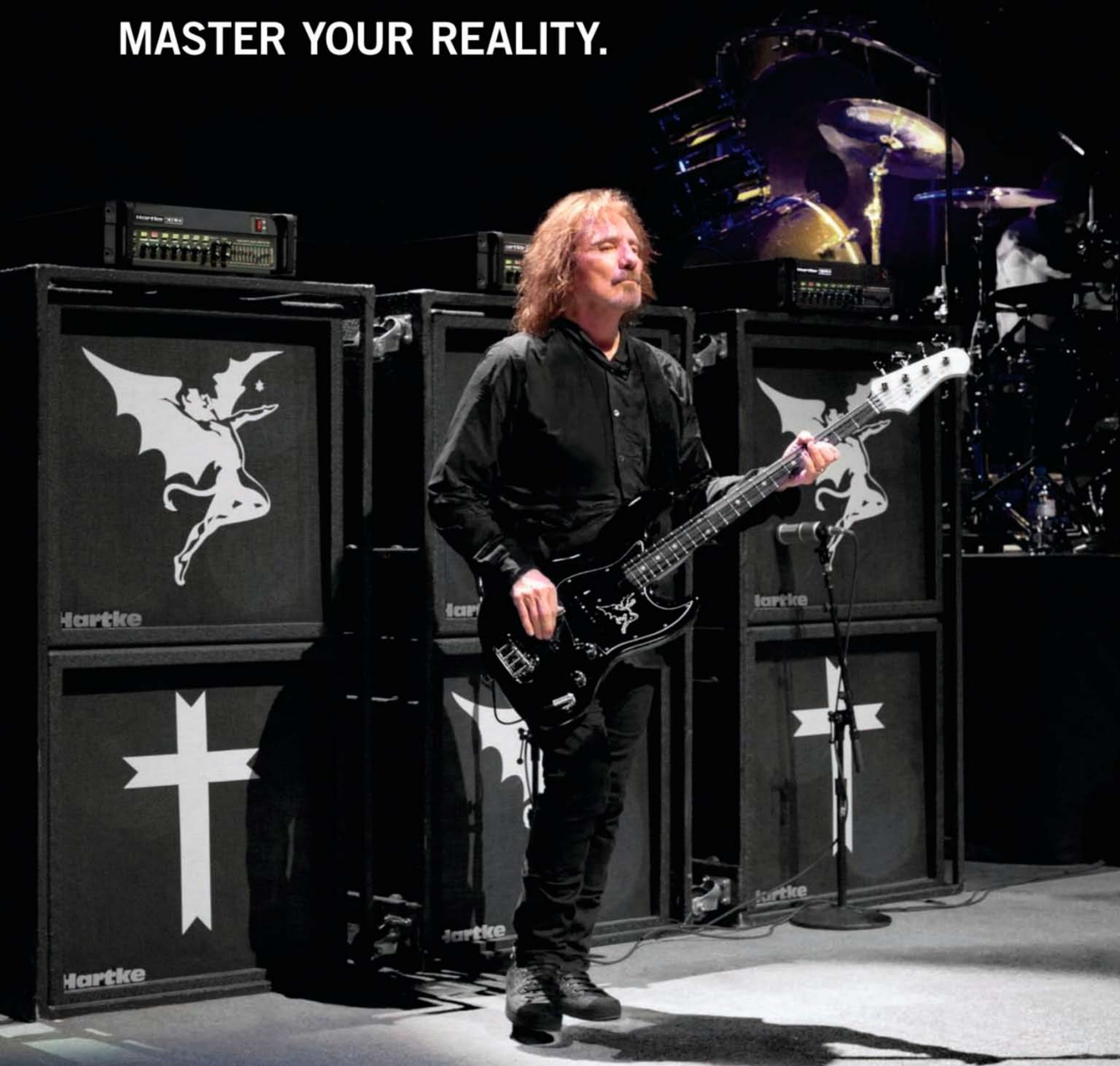
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COMMUNITY

LOWDOWN



BRIAN FOX

NAMM MAN

WHEW. AS I REST AND RECOVER FROM ANOTHER MARATHON NAMM SHOW, YOU CAN BET

I'm counting my blessings. For one, it's always an inspiration to see the handiwork of so many brilliant builders and the technological achievements of the industry's brightest engineers. Having the opportunity to fist-bump the best bassists in the biz is an added benefit of the show. And emerging from it with my health intact—having dodged the ubiquitous NAMMthrax virus—well, for that I may be most thankful of all.

There's a whole lot of great gear coming our way this year. For a glimpse of some of it, flip to our expanded New Gear section, and keep an eye out in the months to come. If new gear doesn't float your boat, there's lots of other stuff to love in this issue. Dive into our (long overdue) cover story on Gary Willis for a glimpse of what it takes to become a world-class player. Get to know old friends and new in Community and Bass Notes, and prepare to wear your fingers down to bloody stumps on the face-melting shred fest that is this month's Transcription, Juan Alde-
rete's killer bass line on the Racer X's "Scarified." Now dig in!

*B-24!!!
O-!!*

PLUG IN

Letters to the Editor

◀ I've been a BASS PLAYER subscriber since its conception, and I recently received your February issue with Darryl Jenifer of Bad Brains fame on the cover. I was really excited about this man being on the cover, since he's a Rasta in the truest sense and represents a positive vibe while also being a badass player. I showed the cover to my 11-year-old son and explained to him how cool it is for this man to be on the cover of your magazine. Then, I turn to page 82 and see Ryan Martinie in blackface. What the hell is this sh-- about?!

In reference to your [February] editorial, regulating Victor Wooten to feature and putting Darryl Jenifer on your cover is not a risk. What is a

risk—and in my opinion just plain stupid ignorance—is you putting Ryan Martinie in blackface. It's not only stupid ignorance, it's offensive and racist.

My questions to you, your photographer, and your magazine publisher are: What were you thinking? Did you think this through or did you just flip a coin? Were you trying to alienate the Black and socially conscious consumer? Were you playing some sick joke by it being Black History month?

I'm still trying to figure this one out, but one thing I did figure out is to cancel

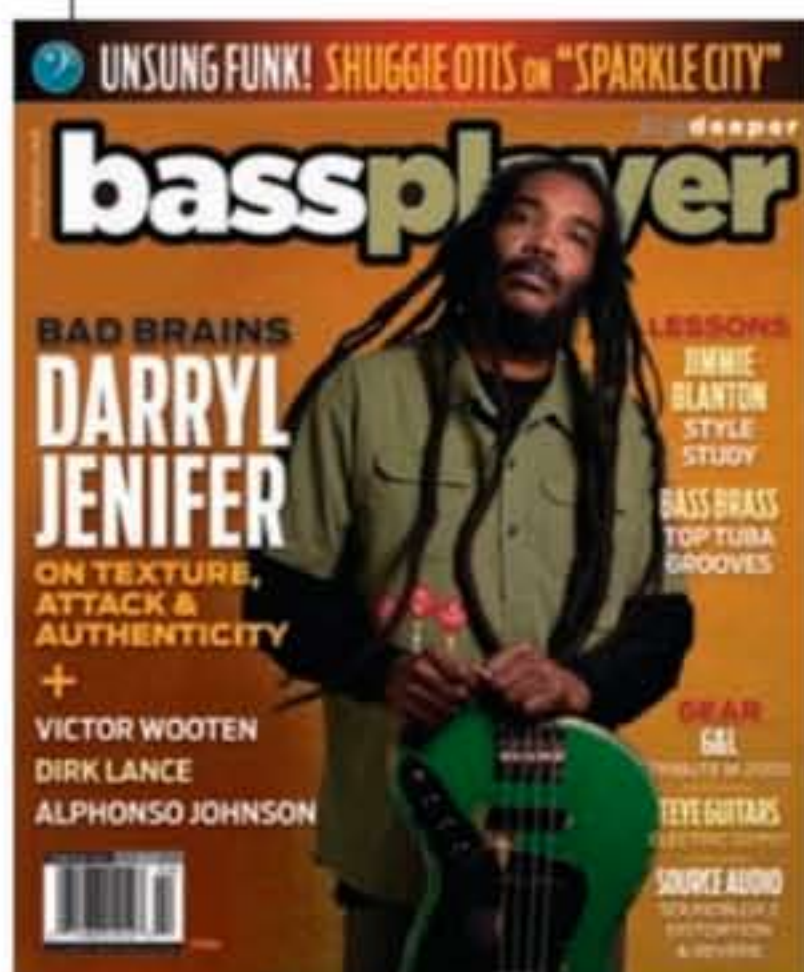
my 20-plus years subscription, and I hope that the players on your advisory board and other consumers as well cease their relationships with you and boycott your magazine as well. I plan to do whatever I can to bring this issue to light and I hope the players on your advisory board do the same, if not then shame on them.

You guys need to take a long, hard look at yourselves and take responsibility for what I believe to be a gross lack of sensitivity and an apathetic tone that BASS PLAYER has taken by allowing this to happen. —BARRY TROTTER

Mr. Trotter,

For upsetting you and your son, I offer my heartfelt apologies. It was not our intention to offend or alienate, nor was it a calculated move as part of what you call a "sick joke."

As those familiar with Paul Haggard's Outtakes column know, it offers a behind-the-scenes look at the magazine throughout Paul's 24-year tenure here. I wasn't yet on staff at the magazine when that particular photo shoot took place, but over the years I've heard the story re-told by all those involved—Ryan Martinie, Paul Haggard, and then-Editor-in-Chief Bill Leigh. By all accounts, it was an extremely awkward misunderstanding. In running the photo, my hope was to shine a light so that people might avoid such moments in their own artistic endeavors. Perhaps in this instance, I missed the mark. Thank you for your support over the years. —BRIAN FOX



COURT OF OPINION

What's the best upgrade/modification you've done to your bass or basses?

Join the conversation at facebook.com/bassplayermag.



Putting Hipshot tuners (balance!) and flatwounds on my old Yamaha P-Bass knockoff. —**Steve Roberts**



Putting a string adapter on my Steinberger XP2 liberated me from having to use double-ball strings. It feels like escaping North Korea for a free country. —**Rudy Zulkarnaen**



Putting in an EMG VMC (Variable Mid Control) preamp, by far! —**Gino Castillo**



Lindy Fralin pickups, new pots, wiring, and flats on my older Squire P-Bass rebuild. —**Nick Kalen**



Getting Babicz Full Contact bridge and Fender vintage reverse tuners for my Jazz and P-Basses. —**Jesse Arzate**



Installing flatwounds and Fender Custom Shop Alnico 5 pickups on my '62 Reissue Jazz Bass, sanding the finish from the back of the neck, and removing the pickguard.

—**James Perry**



Adding Seymour Duncan Antiquity II pickups, an Aguilar OBP-3 preamp, and a Badass II bridge to my '75 Fender Japan. —**Nelson Wu**



Seymour Duncan Quarter-Pound pickups on my '75 P-bass. —**Dennis Neil Jones**



I had Geddy Lee sign my Geddy Lee signature model J-Bass on the set of *I Love You, Man*. Yes, I got paid to play "Limelight" all day while they had me stand in to set the lights and cameras up for that sequence. All three members of Rush were just the coolest people to meet. Grateful I met my heroes.

—**Danny Rowe**



Switching to upright. —**Max Santandrea**



Added two DiMarzio P's, a Hipshot detuner, and Kahler trem to my '74 Tele bass. It's a great axe! —**Charles Fletcher**



Replaced the neck pickup on my MIM Jazz Bass with a Lollar Precision split-coil and strung it *BEAD*. It's a pure rock bass! —**Sam McAinch**



DIG MY RIG!

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER I FIRST PICKED UP

the bass, I have the unbelievable good fortune to be that rarest of all creatures: A musician who can walk into a music store with money to spend and walk out again empty-handed, knowing there's nothing I could buy that would make me happier than what I already have.

On the left is a Rickenbacker 4001E I bought used in the fall of 1979. This is my most prized possession—when the house is burning down, as soon as the wife and kids are safe, I'm going back in for the Rick. With Rotosound rounds on it, it is the ultimate rock bass. The 'burst Rick is an '05 4003FL fretless. I've got flats on this and it sounds as close to an upright as I'm going to get until I find the time and energy to learn the upright. Next is an American-made Ernie Ball MusicMan Sterling I bought used a few years back for a steady gig that needed a "normal" bass sound. As an overall, go-anywhere do-anything instrument, this is the best bass I've ever owned and the one I play most.

The Hartke 3500 head and 4x10 cabinet is the most flexible amp I've owned. With my instruments and this amp I can get pretty much any sound I need.

The pedalboard is as simple as they come and is really only there so that I can switch basses without unplugging. The basses go into a Behringer B100 selector pedal, and the output of that goes into a Boss TU-2 chromatic tuner. I've got a Morley ABC on order to replace the Behringer.

Not in this picture is the Phil Jones Sound Bass Cub I use for practice, rehearsal, and small gigs. Best (of many) small amp I've owned, reliable, portable, flexible, you name it.

They say money can't buy you happiness but money has bought me this stuff and I can't think of anything else I own that's made me as happy as these toys have!"

—MIKE LEIPE

Got a rig you think we'd dig? Email a photo and a description to digmyrig@gmail.com.



THE REAL WORLD

Robert Harper

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Occupation AmeriCorps/musician

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Basses Schecter Hellraiser Extreme 5-strings

Rig DNA Amps 1350 head and 4x10 cabinet, Bag End 4x10 cabinet

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Strings Ernie Ball

Heroes & Inspiration Louis Johnson, Larry Graham, Marcus Miller, T.M. Stevens, and Bootsy Collins

Contact RobertHarperBass.com

How did you come to play bass?

I saw a live band up close for the first time as a child when I was around 11. The guitar player fascinated me, so my grandmother and I went to look at electric guitars, and then basses. I figured four strings would be easier than six, so I chose the bass and immediately fell in love with it!

What's a lesson you've learned along the way?

No matter how small a gig may be, there is always a significant amount of experience to be gained. And don't play a million notes when you're auditioning; give the band what it needs—good solid bass!

What are your musical goals?

To finish new songs in the studio, reissue my CD/EP, continue marketing my music merchandise, produce a female gospel group, and tour with a major act.



Want to introduce yourself? Find submission guidelines at bassplayer.com/realworld. Get selected for The Real World and receive a set of D'Addario EXL170 bass strings and a T-shirt. All those who submit will receive D'Addario's FretBuzz newsletter.



TIMELINE

This Month In Bass History April

- 1ST** German geneticist Flora Polis isolates protein EADG1, the "Funk gene," by analyzing sudor driblets extracted from the wardrobes of Verdine White, Larry Graham, and Bootsy Collins. **2011.**
- 2ND** Fender's Don Randall gives the public its first look at the Precision Bass in the April issue of *Musician's Trade* magazine, **1952.**
- 3RD** Scott LaFaro, best known for his work with Bill Evans, is born, **1936.**
- 4TH** Jazz bassist Gene Ramey born, **1913.**
- 5TH** Patent issued for the Ampeg Baby Bass pickup, **1966.**
- 6TH** Paul Young hits No. 1 with *The Secret Of Association*, which featured Pino Palladino's fretless Music Man StingRay work on songs like "Everytime You Go Away," **1985.**
- 8TH** The Supremes record "Where Did Our Love Go," with James Jamerson on bass, at Motown Studios in Detroit, **1964.**
- 10TH** Italian double bass virtuoso and composer Domenico Dragonetti born, **1763.** Marvin Gaye recorded his version of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine," with James Jamerson on bass, at Motown Studios in Detroit, **1967.**
- 13TH** Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna bassist Jack Casady born, **1944.** • Slap funk icon Louis Johnson born, **1955.**
- 15TH** Upright master Richard Davis born, **1930.**
- 17TH** Jazz bassist Buster Williams born, **1942.**
- 18TH** Chic's Bernard Edwards dies, **1996.** • Double Trouble bass man Tommy Shannon born, **1946.**
- 22ND** Composer, bandleader, and bass legend Charles Mingus born, **1922.** Composer and sideman Paul Chambers born, **1935.**
- 24TH** Bandleader and composer Stafford James born, **1926.**
- 26TH** Nashville studio icon Dave Pomeroy born, **1956.**
- 28TH** Roger Waters' lyrics and bass lines help take Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* to No. 1, **1973.**



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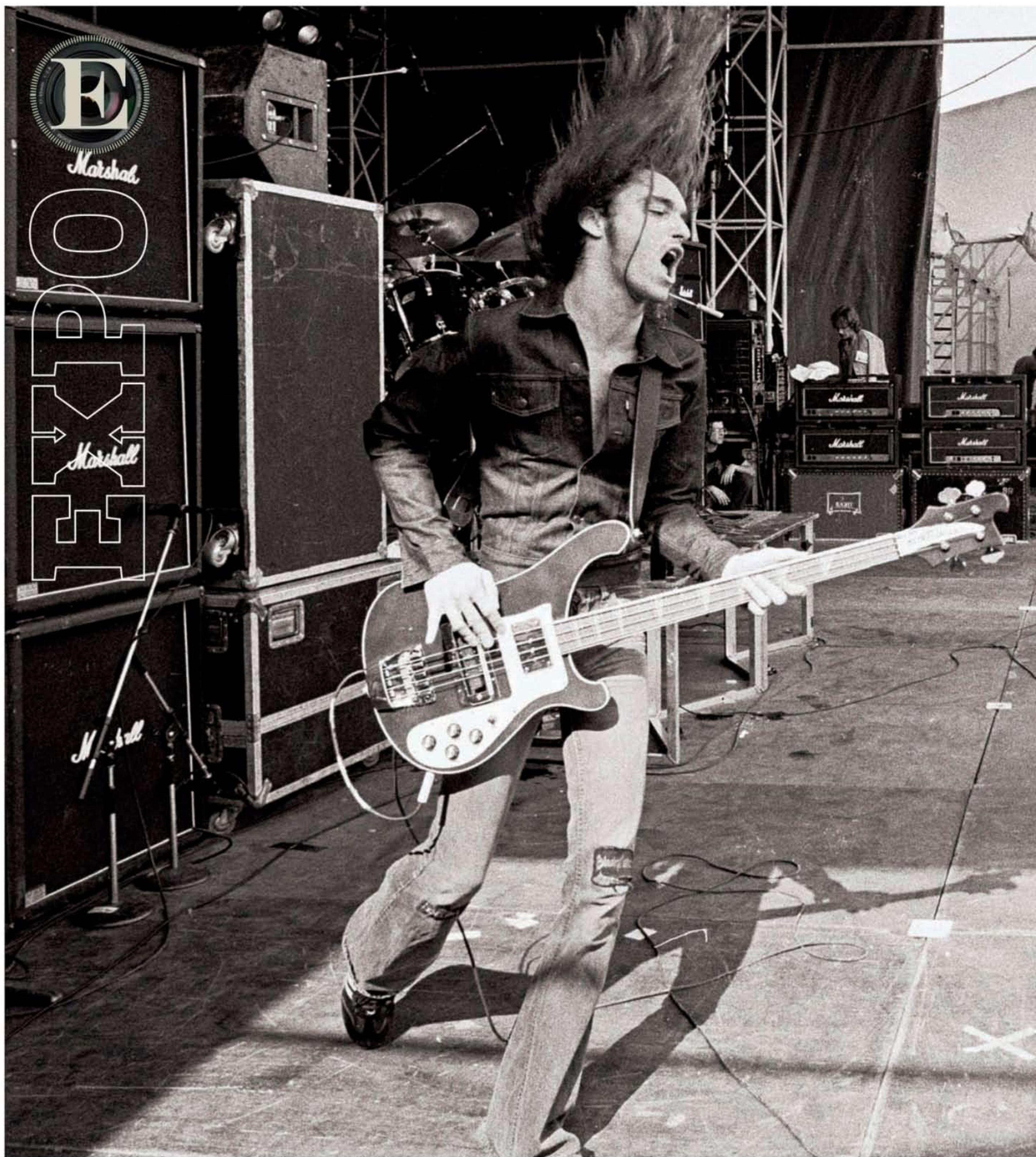
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Whiplash!

With pimped-out Ric in hand, Cliff Burton thrashes as Metallica rocks the Poperinge Festival in Belgium on June 10th, 1984. At lower right, note Cliff's trademark Morley Power Fuzz Wah. For a closer look at the Aria Pro II SB Black 'n' Gold I bass Burton favored in later years, check out the review of the brand new reissue on page 54.





BASSNOTES



CHRIS SCHWEGLER/ATLAS/CONNS

COHEED AND CAMBRIA

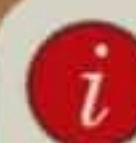
Zach Cooper

From Classical To Cambria

BY JON D'AURIA

ZACH COOPER HAD BEEN STUDYING CLASSICAL UPRIGHT BASS FOR over a year when he got a call from his producer friend asking him if he'd be interested in trying out for a progressive-rock band. When Cooper learned the band was Coheed and Cambria, he dropped everything and scheduled an audition. While it seemed like an unlikely leap to go from bowing Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* to shredding post-hardcore riffs, it was the audition process itself that Cooper found more unlikely than anything.

"I had just heard two short clips of songs played acoustically beforehand. When I got to the studio for the audition, I thought I'd be playing with the band, but instead they put



INFO

LISTEN



Coheed and Cambria, *Aftermath: Ascension & Descension* [Hundred Handed/Everything Evil, 2012]

EQUIP

Basses Fender American Standard Jazz Bass, Fender Highway One Precision Bass, Fender Standard Jazz Bass V, Christopher Upright Bass

Rig Fender TB-1200 head, Fender Pro Series 810 cab

Strings DR Strings Hi-Beam, .045-.105

on newer versions of the songs and I had to play to them with everyone standing around staring at me. It was very intense."

Cooper nailed the tryout, and a mere two days later he was already in the studio recording songs for the band's double album, *The Aftermath: Ascension & Descension*. The result is a diverse array of bass that varies from fast and heavy to moody and spacey. His upright even makes an appearance on two tracks, though his playing on it is far from classical.

Was it difficult walking into a band that's been together for nearly 18 years?

It was, but it wasn't. It was because these guys have so much history and have done so much together, and original drummer Josh Eppard came back, so it was a lot at once. They've been incredible about making me feel like a member of their family, and more than anything, an important part of the team.

Did you have free rein to write on this material?

I had a ton of freedom. They encouraged me to play things as I heard them, and they wanted my individual voice on the record. At some points, I toned down things in a way I might not have if I were more comfortable. On a couple songs, I didn't know what they were looking for conceptually, so I'd go to them and they would dish out some ideas.

Did you feel any pressure to replicate Mic Todd, whose position you've replaced?

I was a fan of the band before all of this happened, so part of me wanted to emulate Mic's playing. I was definitely conscious of it, but I seemed to stick with my own style. Some of the ways he plays isn't my strong suit, so I probably wouldn't have played like that regardless.

How did you achieve your tone?

They took three signals from me for this record. I used an Ampeg SVT head in the studio into an old Ampeg 8x10 and miked it. They took the DI out of the head, and then split it to one clean signal and one distorted one.

What techniques did you use?

I've always been strictly a finger player, but "Goodnight Fair Lady" was the first time in my life I tracked with a pick. I've always liked pickstyle players, but I was really out of my comfort zone. When I grab a pick it feels foreign, and my shoulders and arms tense up. But it definitely enhanced the song and made me play a lot simpler than I usually do, in an eighth-note sort of way. **BP**



MOONALICE, DAVID NELSON BAND, JEFFERSON STARSHIP

i INFO



Moonalice, Solo *The Long Haul* [33rd Street, 2001]; Latest gig downloads at moonalice.com

LISTEN

EQUIP

Bass Modulus Genesis VJ
Rig Ampeg SVT head and SVT-810 cabinet
Strings GHS M3050 Stainless Steel Precision Flatwounds (.045-.105) or D'Addario EXL165 Nickel Wounds (.045-.105.)

CONNECT

Dig video of Pete Sears' "tabla technique." bassplayer.com/april2013



Pete Sears Far-Out Fingerstyle

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PETE SEARS' 50-YEAR CAREER CONNECTS

British folk, blues, and psychedelic rock with sister San Francisco sounds. Keyboard and bass-session work for Rod Stewart and tours with Long John Baldry prompted Sears to join Jefferson Starship and Hot Tuna, and led to collaborations with John Lee Hooker. Sears is currently a member of psychedelic torchbearers Moonalice and the David Nelson Band, a.k.a. New Riders Of The Purple Sage. Sears' sound has ranged from bright and aggressive with Jefferson Starship (think of "Stranger") to the mellower, flatwound sound he favors in Moonalice. Similarly, his technique ranges from extremely simple to rather complex. His far-out fingerstyle becomes a furious blur of motion when he truly takes off.

Do you use all four fingers on your plucking hand, and are you incorporating upstrokes as well as downstrokes?

It may appear otherwise, but I play downstrokes using my first three fingers for the most part. For simple songs, I use only my index finger for more of an upright aesthetic. I incorporate my middle finger when I feel the need for more notes and add my ring finger to the equation to for faster passages. In those circumstances I lead with my ring finger, so it's

JIMMY LESLIE



3-2-1 [ring, middle, index]. My pinkie might sneak in occasionally or come along for a ride with the 3rd finger.

What rhythmic influences helped shape your plucking style?

Sometimes I incorporate tabla rhythms that I picked up back in 1967 when I played in a band called Sam Gopal Dream, which featured a brilliant raga guitar player named Mick Hutchinson and an Indian tabla player, Sam Gopal. I'd learn his tabla rhythms and use my three-finger technique to match his playing. For example, I might play the root tone of the raga along with the low-pitched drum [*bayan*], and then hit the octave above along with the high-pitched drum [*dayan*].

Plucking over the neck adds an extra percussive element, and you can incorporate slapping & tapping up and down the strings to get various harmonics to ring out over the top. If you bend a fretted note once in a while, you can emulate the sound a tabla player makes when he pushes down on the low-pitched drum's head.

That's an intriguing technique, and it's fun to watch.

Bass is a concept—a way of thinking where you and the drummer become one. In that case, the drummer was a tabla player and it led to all kinds of interesting things. We shared bills with Pink Floyd and Fairport Convention. Jimi Hendrix sat in with us. We got a raga going with him, and he started sliding his guitar back and forth across the mic stand—now that was fun! **BP**



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BASS?

Some loser stole Pete Sears' custom Doug Erwin bass, and his '63 Fender Jazz, when a riot broke out before a Jefferson Starship gig in Germany in 1978. He's still trying to locate them. Find more information at bassplayer.com/april2013.



Phil Chen & Bob Glaub Pay Tribute To Bob Babbitt & Duck Dunn

BY CHRIS JISI

THE BASS WORLD LOST MANY CON-sequential players in 2012, including Elton John bassist Bob Birch, Iron Butterfly's Lee Dorman, MC5's Michael Davis, the Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch, and jazz doubler Charles Flores. Looming largest, though, was the passing of session giants Duck Dunn and Bob Babbitt. With that in mind—and in the spirit of BASS PLAYER LIVE! 2011's tribute clinic to James Jamerson (with James Jamerson Jr., Pino Palladino, Phil Chen, and Allan Slutsky)—BP was fortunate to get two bassists who were close to Dunn and Babbitt to present a tribute clinic at BASS PLAYER LIVE! 2012. L.A. session mainstay Bob Glaub was a good friend of Duck Dunn, and rock vet Phil Chen was super tight with Bob Babbitt. (Nate Watts, who had also planned to be on the panel, was called to New York City by Stevie Wonder the night before.)

After introductions, Glaub began with an overview of Dunn and his credits, and a listen to some

of Sam & Dave's "Soul Man." Said Glaub, "Duck was self-taught; he learned by playing along with records. If you knew him you loved him; he was one of the funniest, hippest, sweetest cats, with a charming Southern hospitality." Collectively, Booker T. & the M.G.'s (Dunn, Booker T. Jones on keys, drummer Al Jackson Jr., and guitarist Steve Cropper) revolutionized soul music—a form made up of blues, country, and gospel—to create their own "Southern soul." It was grittier and less sophisticated than what was being made by their friendly rivals at Motown. The other key was they were an integrated band at a time of racial tension in the South, so they were trailblazers in that aspect, as well. Glaub then spun Otis Redding's "I Can't Turn You Loose," pointing out that his bass lines were typically simple, repetitive, and riff-based, but also the harmonic focal point of the songs.

Chen recalled living in London in the late '60s



Phil Chen (left) and Bob Glaub

and seeing Redding backed by the M.G.'s for the first time. "I saw two white guys, and I thought, Oh, I guess the guys on the record couldn't make it. Then they started to play, and I was blown away. That's when I realized soul music has no color." Phil remembered Babbitt as a close friend and confidant, who started on upright but found his way to bass guitar just before moving from his native Pittsburgh to Detroit. When they were on the set of the documentary *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, Chen—who served as Bob's bass tech—noticed that Babbitt was using light-gauge "cheesecutter" strings and gave him heavy-gauge flatwounds. "But it really didn't matter what strings he had," Phil conceded, "because he had the *feel*." Babbitt's lighter touch was also discussed, along with the revelation that when he moved on from Motown to the New York and Philly session scenes, engineers would ask him to dig in more. Chen explained how the Motown bass style founded by Jamerson (and adapted so well by Babbitt) was busier, more linear, and more swinging—with jazz and bebop influences—than Stax and Muscle Shoals bass. He then spun some of Marvin Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me (the Ecology)." Chen acknowledged it was a challenge for Babbitt

to have to follow Jamerson's genius, but noted that his work on a half-dozen seminal tracks left his own mark at Motown. Babbitt later also made an imprint on New York and Philadelphia, with tracks like Gladys Knight's "Midnight Train to Georgia," which Phil spun.

As the discussion turned to how both gentlemen played for the song and the singer, Glaub recalled how Dunn—who got his nickname from his dad while watching Donald Duck cartoons as a child—told him one of his tricks was to go in and listen to the first playback, and then he'd go back and play *half* of what he played. "He'd pare it way back," says Bob. Dunn also shared with Glaub how Al Jackson would warn him, "Don't ever play in front of me," meaning don't rush. "Al would say, 'Wait on two', which meant don't play the backbeat before his snare hit it." Glaub shared another anecdote in which Dunn told him to turn the tone knob on his P-Bass all the way up when playing live, otherwise "you get a room full of boom." As the clinic wrapped up, Grammy and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame awards for both greats were cited. As Chen put it, both men were geniuses who left us with indelible bass on timeless music. **BP**



SHANE TIMM

FUN.

Nate Harold

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BY JON D'AURIA

FROM HIS EARLY YEARS GROWING UP ON A CATTLE RANCH

in a small Kansas town, Nate Harold knew he would one day pursue music and make it his life. After studying piano for a few years, his love of Pearl Jam's Jeff Ament led him to buy his first P-Bass at age 13, and dedicate his time to learning the instrument. In his late teens, Harold moved to Lawrence, Kansas, a place he still calls home, where he plunged into the emo-indie scene and took over the bass duties for the Get Up Kids and Koufax.

In 2008, his mutual friends Nate Reuss, Andrew Dost, and Jack Antonoff asked him to join their new indie-pop project, fun., knowing that he was the bassist they were searching for. Harold agreed, and four years later the group is playing to sold-out venues, performing on *Saturday Night Live*, earning six Grammy nominations, and making everyone hum their hit single "We Are Young."

Already exceeding his lofty childhood ambitions thanks to fun.'s 2012 breakout album *Some Nights*, Harold is adjusting to the widespread notoriety by expanding his abilities in a band that features thick layers of keyboards, four-part vocal harmonies, and skillfully picked driving bass lines.

Was it difficult finding your place in a band that utilizes keyboards?

A lot of my lines are competing with synth bass lines, so it's all

about finding a happy medium to sit between the percussion and the keyboards. It was a little intimidating at first, knowing that I had to battle a Moog. I just focused on filling out the low frequencies and making my lines fit the songs as much as possible.

How did producer Jeff Bhasker record your bass?

Jeff is a hip-hop producer, so there were no amps in the studio whatsoever; I went straight into the board. Usually when I track we use a DI, mic an amp, overdub parts, and sometimes re-amp my lines, but this time was really straightforward. It was something new, but I love the results.

Have you always been a pick player?

Actually, I only started playing with a pick leading up to playing with fun. My friend Rob Pope plays with Spoon, and he gets an amazing tone that I love, so I developed my own version of that. I keep my pinkie across the strings at the bridge and use that as my muting technique. If it's a slower song I'll pick closer up to the neck to get more low end.

Describe your ideal tone.

My favorite tone comes from a vintage Fender Precision Bass through my 1976 Ampeg B-15N flip-top. That's ideal, but I can't get that sound everywhere. I don't take much vintage stuff on the road, because it gets used and abused every night. I try to keep my bass present in the mix, and I like the low mids to stand out most.

Describe one of the band's shows from your perspective.

Most of the time our shows are a blur. Some of the shows are so exciting and so big that I almost black out. I have one shining moment in the set on the song "All Alone" where I have a fantastic bass feature at the end, and that's where I have to face my fears and walk to the front of the stage in the spotlight and play that part. It's terrifying every night. I just think, "Don't trip, don't trip, don't trip." **BP**

INFO

LISTEN



fun., *Some Nights* [Fueled By Ramen, 2012]

Bass Fender '62 Reissue Precision Bass, Epiphone ET-285

Rig Two RCAB Audio 50-watt heads, four RCAB Audio 2x12 cabinets

EQUIP



Effects Electro-Harmonix Big Muff, Boss DD-3 Digital Delay, Electro-Harmonix POG2, Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Boy Delay, JHS Pulp 'N' Peel Compressor

Strings Ernie Ball Slinky, .045-.105

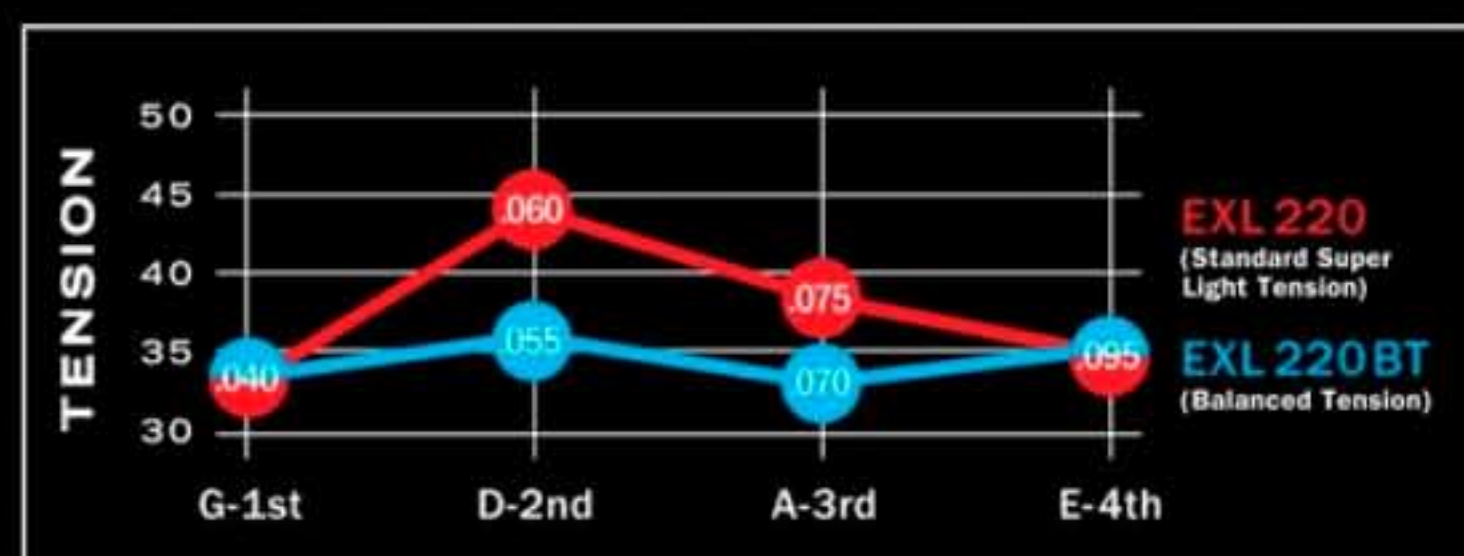
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BP RECOMMENDS



TEGAN AND SARA

HEARTTHROB [Warner Bros.]

Heartthrob's studio-enhanced pop vocals and dance synths might signal the end of Tegan and Sara's soft indie-folk crooning, but the playing and production, by a trio of bass session masters—**Mike Elizondo**,

Chris Chaney, and **Justin Meldal-Johnsen**—still gives it some street cred. —JON D'AURIA



THE ENTRANCE BAND

FINE FLOW [Spiritual Pajamas]

Paz Lenchantin and her psychedelic rock trio return with a hauntingly tripped out analog EP. The vintage production does nothing to subdue the driving and often bluesy lines of Lenchantin, who takes the lead

on the band's most ambitious record to date. —JON D'AURIA



THE COLD & LOVELY

THE COLD & LOVELY [self-released]

In her time off from Smashing Pumpkins, **Nicole Fiorentino** hit the studio to complete the impressive debut album for her band, the Cold & Lovely. The genre-

hopping 11-track record showcases a dynamic contrast to her playing with the Pumpkins, though the songs "Paper and Gun" and "Not With Me" still feature the sultry distorted lines that we've come to love her for. —JON D'AURIA

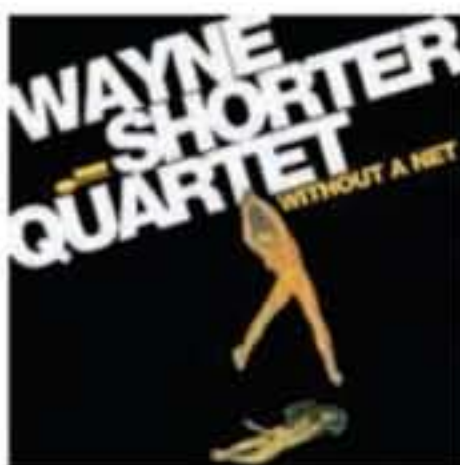


CHARLES FLORES

IMPRESSIONS OF GRAFFITI [Dafnison Music]

Sadly, **Charles Flores'** sophomore solo CD—a sturdy set of Latin jazz originals—is a posthumously-released one. The Cuban-born Flores, a member of the Michel Camilo Trio since 2002, succumbed to cancer last August.

Joined here by Camilo drummer Cliff Almond, pianist Elio Villafranca and guest guitarist Wayne Krantz, Flores favors his 6-string, most effectively handling the melody on the swaying "Miriam," and issuing a dense 6/8 groove and eventful solo on "Influence." Ultimately, it's his lone upright statement, the haunting "Gentile Words," that will stay with you. —CHRIS JISI



WAYNE SHORTER QUARTET

WITHOUT A NET [Blue Note]

As a fearless purveyor of new directions in jazz, Wayne Shorter keeps moving forward while players half his age seem content just to coast. It helps to have such a dynamic combo behind him; pianist Danilo Perez,

bassist **John Patitucci** and drummer Brian Blade have more than ten years as a unit under their belt, and they churn out a polyrhythmic furor that gives Shorter the room he needs to take flight. Patitucci is at his fluid best throughout, probing the freestyle edges of "Orbits" and mixing equal parts lyricism and technical precision on the epic "Pegasus." —BILL MURPHY



ATOMS FOR PEACE

AMOK [XL Recordings]

Of all the projects that **Flea** has pursued outside the Red Hot Chili Peppers, his work with Atoms For Peace—that other group fronted by Thom Yorke—might be the most radical shift you'll ever hear him make. It's

not just that the music is dark, stripped-down, and relentlessly electronic; it's that he can fold himself so effortlessly into the atmospherics, emulating a circuit-bent tone generator (on the creepy title track) or a wobbly Moog (in the breakout single "Judge, Jury and Executioner") while leaving his unmistakable fingerprints on the result. —BILL MURPHY



BALLAKÉ SISSOKO

AT PEACE [Six Degrees]

There's a lushness of range to the Malian many-stringed kora that makes you forget you're listening to one instrument, and Sissoko is a deft hand at bringing out all its nuances—especially the low end, which resonates with

a surprising depth on contemplative ballads like "Boubalaka" and the cascading "Asa Branca" (featuring the plucked cello of Vincent Segal). This is music that might be older than the blues, but in its own quiet way, it dips and sways with just as much sensuality. —BILL MURPHY



JESSE FISCHER & SOUL CYCLE

RETRO FUTURE [ObliqueSound]

There's not a more happening corner of the globe right now than Brooklyn, New York, and that extends to the music scene. Keyboardist/producer Jesse Fischer's latest, with his three-horn septet, *Soul Cycle*, is as time-

less as the borough in which it was recorded. Seeking to explore technology's affect on society over the last four decades, Fischer embraces '60s/'70s soul jazz as a rhythmic and melodic base. From there, he draws upon an ample sonic buffet of electronica and hip-hop to enhance seven memorable originals and inspired reimaginings of "Aquarius," "Electric Ladyland," and "Land-slide"—all while retaining an organic, "played" vibe.

On the bottom, **Solomon Dorsey** (currently on tour with José James) is a root revelation, pacing his phat feels with expressive step-outs from both ends of the neck on tracks like "Moon Ship," "Digital Savanna," "Midnight Dancer," and "Keep the Faith." It's music that takes you to familiar new places. —CHRIS JISI

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NEW GEAR

NEW GEAR From The 2013 NAMM Show

This month and next, we'll be sifting through everything we saw at this year's NAMM Show to bring you the best in bass. You can find more on this and other new gear at bassplayer.com.

AGUILAR

As Aguilar's popular Tone Hammer heads continue to fly off shelves, the company has sharpened its focus further up the signal chain with the release of four new pickups. The **AG 4P-HOT** and **AG 4J-HOT** are designed with oversized magnets and overwound coils for increased output in P- and J-style pickup configurations. Aguilar also unveiled two new soapbar pickups, the dual ceramic bar **DCB**, and the single-coil alnico **Super Single**. aguilaramp.com



DCB (top) and Super Single



Heritage B-15N



AG 4J-HOT



AG 4P-HOT

AMPEG

Adding to its Heritage line of American-made amps, Ampeg introduced the **Heritage B-15N**. While the Heritage B-15 of recent years featured point-to-point wiring and chrome accouterment, the all-tube B-15N utilizes circuit board and a flat black finish to deliver the same performance at a lower cost. The Heritage B-15 will be available this year in a limited run of 250 units. Ampeg has also upped the power factor in its Portaflex series of lightweight heads and cabinets with the 800-watt **PF-800**. The powerful head is especially potent when paired with the ported PF-410HLF and PF-115LF extension cabs. ampeg.com



PF-800



Dr. Green bass effects



MiBass Interface

ASHDOWN

Ashdown is extending its lead as a frontrunner in the British bass race with a range of new products, including the 100-watt **CTM 100**, and the 15-watt **CTM 15**, both part of its venerated Classic Tube Magnifier line of heads. The company also introduced the cute-as-can-be **MiBass Interface**, a no-frills USB bass interface featuring the company's trademark VU meter. For effects-heads, Ashdown has paired with boutique pedal builder Dr. Green to offer a full range of bass effects, including the **Bearded Lady** bass fuzz, the **OctaDose** octave, the **Doctors Note** envelope filter, the **Bass Verb** reverb, and **The Aspirin** compressor. ashdownmusic.com



CTM 15



CTM 100



FENDER

Fender brought a boatload of new basses to the NAMM show, including four new models in its American Vintage Series: the **American Vintage '58 Precision Bass**, featuring a thick C-shape maple neck and fingerboard and chrome pickguard; the **American Vintage '63 Precision Bass**, with a rosewood fingerboard; the **American Vintage '64 Jazz Bass**, with a lower-mounted finger rest and period-correct pickup placement; and the **American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass**, with its 4-bolt neck joint, U-shaped neck profile, period-correct bridge pickup placement (closer to the bridge), and pearl block inlays. Fender also expanded its Pawn Shop line of basses, with a **Pawn Shop Mustang Bass** featuring a mid-position "mudbucker," and a **Pawn Shop Bass VI** featuring a 30" scale, a bridge-position humbucker, and a floating tremolo system. fender.com

Pawn Shop Bass VI



Pawn Shop Mustang Bass



American Vintage '58 Precision Bass



American Vintage '63 Precision Bass



American Vintage '64 Jazz Bass



American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass



GUILD

Guild has given hardcore semi-hollow bass fans reason to celebrate by reintroducing the legendary **Starfire Bass**. The 30.5"-scale Starfire features a single Bi-Sonic pickup and aminated mahogany top, back, and sides, and is made in Korea. guildguitars.com



G&L

G&L continues to expand its Modern series of basses featuring three bands of onboard EQ. The latest is the **MJ-4**, which features G&L's new Bi-Coil alnico pickups, which utilize two side-by-side coils configured in series-humbucking mode to offer single-coil tones without the hum. glguitars.com

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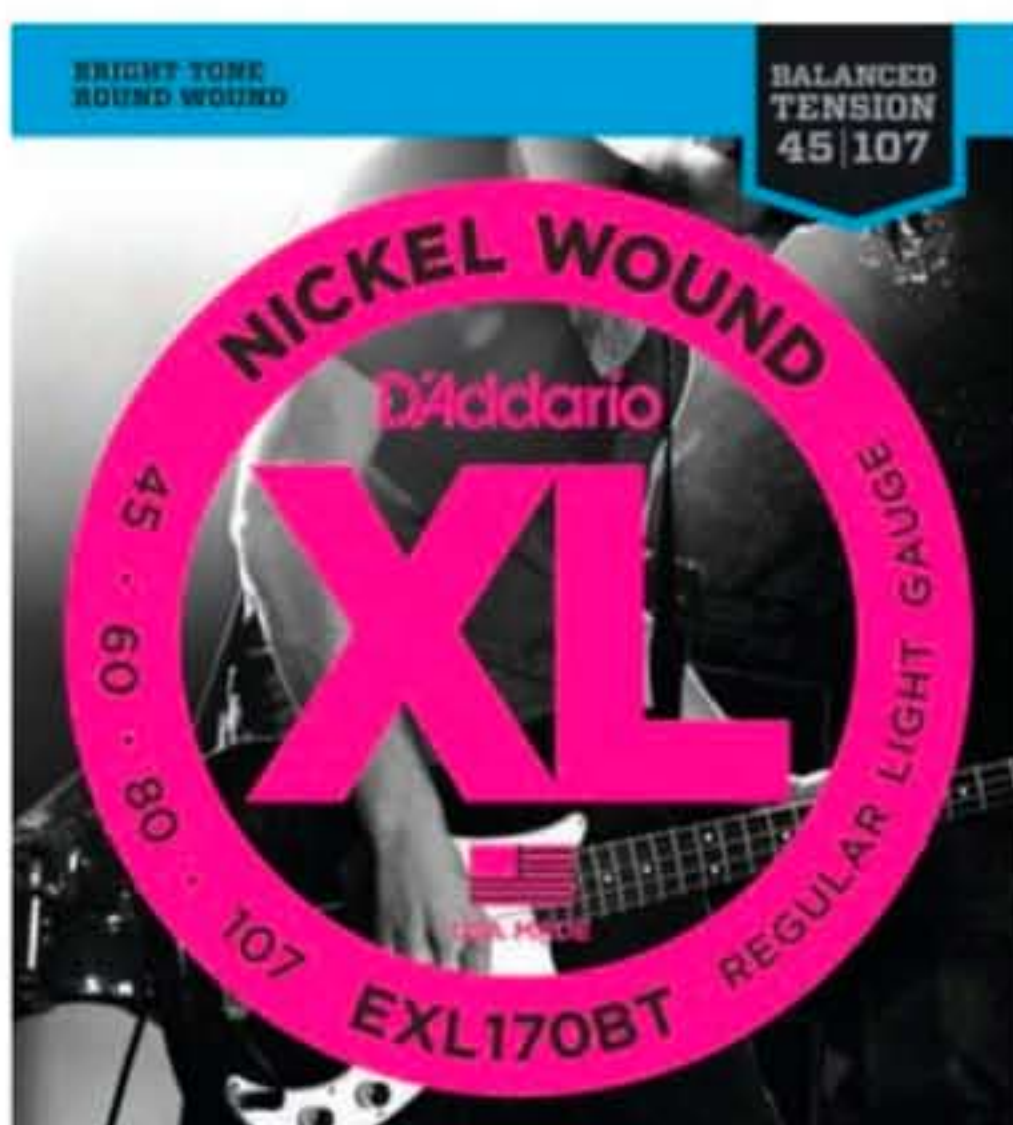
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D'ADDARIO

D'Addario has a new look, having updated its logo and its packaging. In terms of new products, it has developed the new **XL Balanced Tension Bass Strings**, which feature balanced tension across all strings. Stay "tuned" for a more detailed review in the coming months. . . daddario.com



EBS

EBS has teamed with shredder extraordinaire Billy Sheehan to develop the **Billy Sheehan Signature Drive**, which features a built-in compressor and the ability to loop in other pedals through its **CLEAN LOOP** and **DRIVE LOOP** jacks. bass.se



TECH 21

By popular request, Tech 21 has taken its SansAmp Character Series VT Bass pedals and packaged it in DI and rackmount formats. The **VT Bass DI** incorporates a **BLEND** control to mix direct and SansAmp signals, and a **BITE** switch for a treble boost and tighter bass. The **VT Bass Rack** has an additional XLR output level control and an effects loop. tech21nyc.com



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If you think bass stompboxes don't have anything new to offer, you're in for a nasty surprise with the Red Ripper. This wickedly dynamic effect gets meaner the harder you play, shifting from enhanced lower harmonics to buzz-saw, higher harmonic distortions. In addition to an active 3-band EQ and adjustable Drive and Level, the sinister R.I.P. control drives your tone from vintage fuzz to monolithic distortion and beyond, into Brassmaster-style octave fuzz and Moogie-style synth tones. Bloody amazing.



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NEW GEAR

WARWICK

Warwick came strong with no fewer than seven new bass models. Most notable, however, was its entry into the world of ultra-light Class D amplifiers. The **LWA 1000** is a 6-pound, 1,000-watt amplifier that features two parallel channels—each with individual gain control, four bands of EQ, adjustable compressor with bypass function, and mute switch—designed for players who play more than one bass on a given gig. The company also expanded its RockBass line of lower-cost instruments to include the semi-hollow **RockBass Star Bass** and the electric upright **RockBass Triumph**. warwick.de



LWA 1000



RockBass Star Bass



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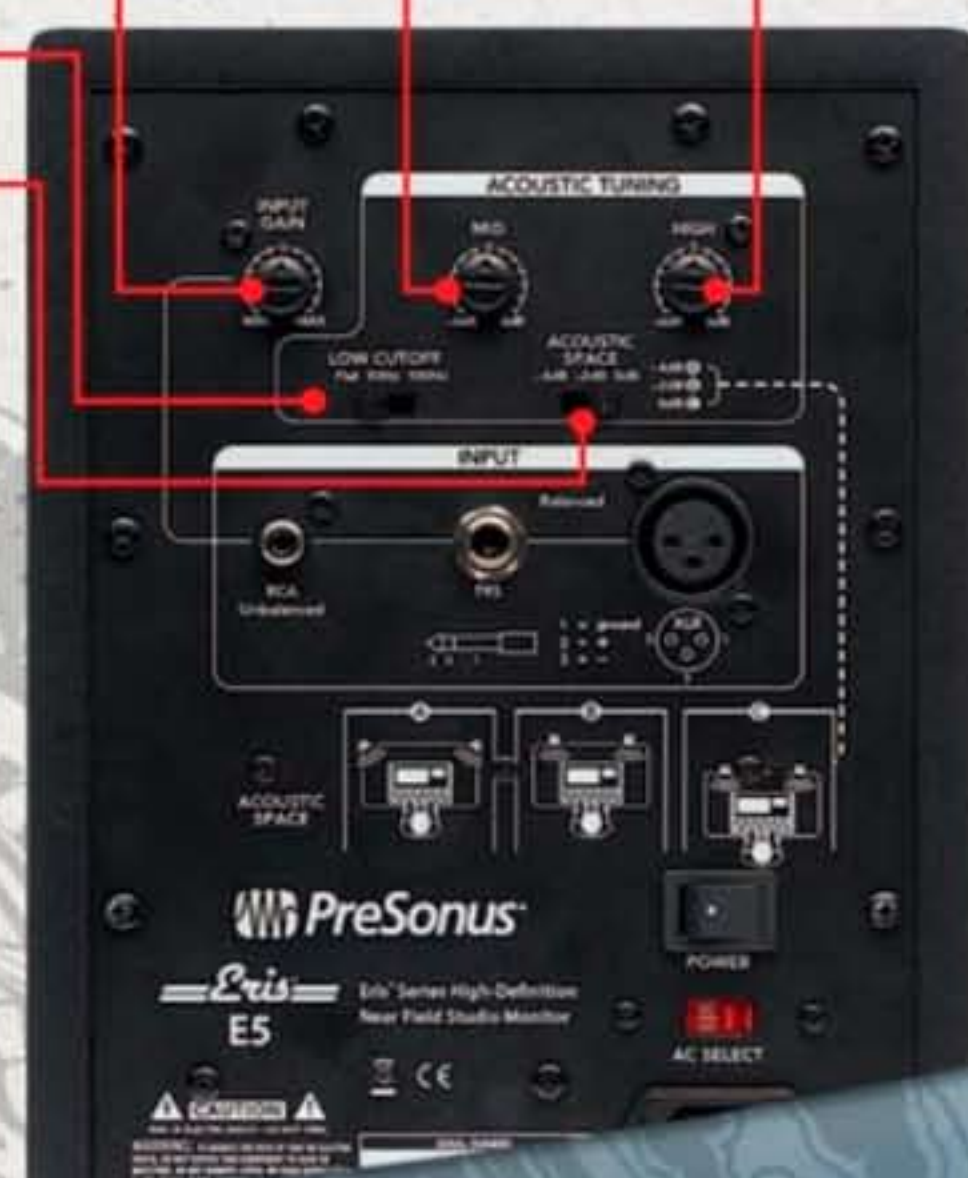
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GARY WILLIS

REFLECTIONS OF AN ICONOCLAST

THIRTY YEARS into a forward-reaching career filled with musical and technical innovation, Gary Willis is finally looking back. And that's a good thing. First, Willis reunited with his Tribal Tech-mates Scott Henderson, Scott Kinsey, and Kirk Covington in 2012 to record *X*, the title marking the band's tenth effort and first in a dozen years. The long layoff only raised the heat of the quartet's fusion torchbearing flame, as the ten-track CD combusts via a combination of jam-induced spontaneous composition and post-production writing and arranging enhancements. Next, Willis—who had been hard-wired to his last two electronica projects, *Triphasic* and *Slaughterhouse*—decided to break free of his computer chains and release an organic trio record. The aptly titled *Retro* is a real-time revelation. Budapest-born drummer Gergo Borlai and Catalan keyboardist Albert Bover (on Rhodes)

join Gary for five heartfelt covers and five exploratory originals that thrust his fretless 5-string into its most exposed, intimate setting yet. Last, Willis is making his long-overdue first appearance on the cover of *BASS PLAYER*, an irony not lost on the soft-spoken bassist with the notorious dry wit. "Well, there goes my cult status," he muttered, adjusting his ever-present cap. "And my 'Talent Deserving Wider Recognition' poll placements."

Gary Willis was born in Longview, Texas, on March 2, 1957. He tried the family piano and guitar before his parents presented him with an electric bass for his 13th birthday. His father played gospel-style piano in church, and Gary soon joined him on bass. "It was key in my development, because through my dad's left hand I learned how the bass and music moved." Drawn to instrumentals on the radio by the likes of Tower Of Power, War, the Crusaders, the Headhunters, and the Allman Brothers Band, Willis picked up the guitar again to gain more harmonic language. He kept both instruments in his sphere while soaking up the bass influences of Rocco Prestia, Paul Jackson, and Jaco

Pastorius. He notes, "They inspired a concept where I would try to get the smallest subdivision of any groove happening in my right hand and then choose whether to play notes or dead-notes in my left hand." Upon entering North Texas State University in 1978, he abandoned guitar to focus solely on bass, realizing it enabled him to have a bigger influence on the music. There, he added the influences of Miles Davis and Bill Evans, while also playing in local Dallas fusion bands.

Willis moved to Los Angeles in 1982 with a working bassist mentality, leading to stints with Phil Upchurch and later Wayne Shorter. Upon meeting Scott Henderson and forming Tribal Tech in 1984, however, his focus turned to his own artistic pursuits. The result was a stage and studio "research lab" where Gary would develop and apply ideas that have since been widely adapted by two generations of bassists across the globe. These

BY CHRIS JISI

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLES ROCHE

include a three-finger right hand plucking technique utilizing the thumb, index, and middle fingers in closed (two strings at a time) or open (three or more strings)



position, with the palm incorporated as a mute; a system that divides the neck into two fingering positions; turning up the amp and using a lighter touch to get a better tone and more range and control of dynamics; and the “Willis Ramp,” a raised piece of wood under the strings between the neck and the pickup that keeps the right hand relaxed by preventing it from working too hard, as well as providing an anchor for the thumb. Then there are the stylistic elements, in which Willis has advanced not only the harmonic and rhythmic language of bass soloing and grooving, but also improvised grooves that engage the soloist while retaining a deep pocket.

We reached out to Gary at his home base in Barcelona, Spain—where he teaches bass, composition, arranging, and jazz ensemble a couple of days a week at the nearby Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya—to ask him about *Retro*, *X*, and his iconic career.

Was *Retro* a deliberate change of direction for you, coming off several production-dominated efforts?

Change of pace was a factor, because heavy production projects can become tedious. But more so, it was good timing with personnel. I had been playing with Albert here in Barcelona; he’s an amazing acoustic pianist and someone I made a mental note to do a project with. I had also worked with Gergo, who is an incredibly creative drummer, and when he moved to Barcelona I jumped at the opportunity to get the three of us in the studio. I had a list of tunes I’d been wanting to record for over 20 years, and this was finally the right combination.

Performing live, I felt the fretless electric bass and acoustic piano didn’t blend particularly well, so I asked Albert to play Rhodes on the CD, and he was game—plus, it fit the retro, ’70s vibe I wanted to embrace. The stripped-down setting really enabled us to focus on the interpretation of the material and how we play together. I definitely feel it’s the most personal album I’ve recorded.

“Change Agent,” “Move,” and your cover of Bill Evans’ “We Will Meet Again” mine straight-ahead trio territory.

Those tunes are all about the interplay and improvisation. They have simple melodies and minimal arrangements, which allows us to explore and create excitement. “Change Agent” is a modal tune I wrote five years ago based on a series of unrelated minor chords. “We Will Meet Again” is a song I’ve always liked playing because it’s so open. Sometimes when I write, I’ll just try to discover chord progressions, and that’s pretty much what “Move” was—a progression I liked playing over that took me out of my comfort zone. Albert embellished it into a melody, and from there we take off and see where it goes.

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COURTESY SHAPESHIFTER

Gary Willis' far-reaching impact on bassists ranges from Aerosmith

vet Tom Hamilton to Dirty Loops' Henrik Linder. Gary's friend and fellow bass force Matt Garrison says, "Gary Willis has been a true inspiration, and the kind of model musician I've aspired to be over the years: He's a genius composer, a master technician on his instrument, an inventor of new pizzicato techniques, and a researcher dedicated to expanding the possibilities of the bass guitar through

GARRISON ON GARY

the implementation and application of new devices. Also,

his deep knowledge and application of harmonic concepts and extraordinary sense of melody make him an artist of devastating impact. Not to mention his ever-evolving growth as an artist—he's not afraid to tackle new ways of creating and performing music and expressing those concepts in a modern and forward-thinking way. Willis is and always will be one of my favorite musicians on earth!"

"Old School" and "Disconnectivity" bring the funk and fusion side of the trio's sound.

I wrote "Old School" a couple of weeks before the session, and I was lucky to discover it, because I was looking for something that balanced the rest of the material. It purposely has a Herbie Hancock Headhunters feel that we put our own twist on. "Disconnectivity" I wrote over 25 years ago after hearing a trio with [Oregon saxophonist] Paul McCandless that had no harmony instruments. During the solos one member would improvise while the other two played linear lines. So that's how I composed the tune: Every melody note is harmonized by just two other notes. Here, Albert plays two notes and I play the other. Then when we solo, it's over a mix of those notes or the chords they imply. We also cover a McCandless tune: Oregon's "Amaryllis" [*Crossing*, ECM, 1984]. I originally programmed it for classical guitar to use in master classes years ago, and I updated it here as a nice vehicle to explore a melodic way of playing.

The rest of your covers—the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood," Milton Nascimento's



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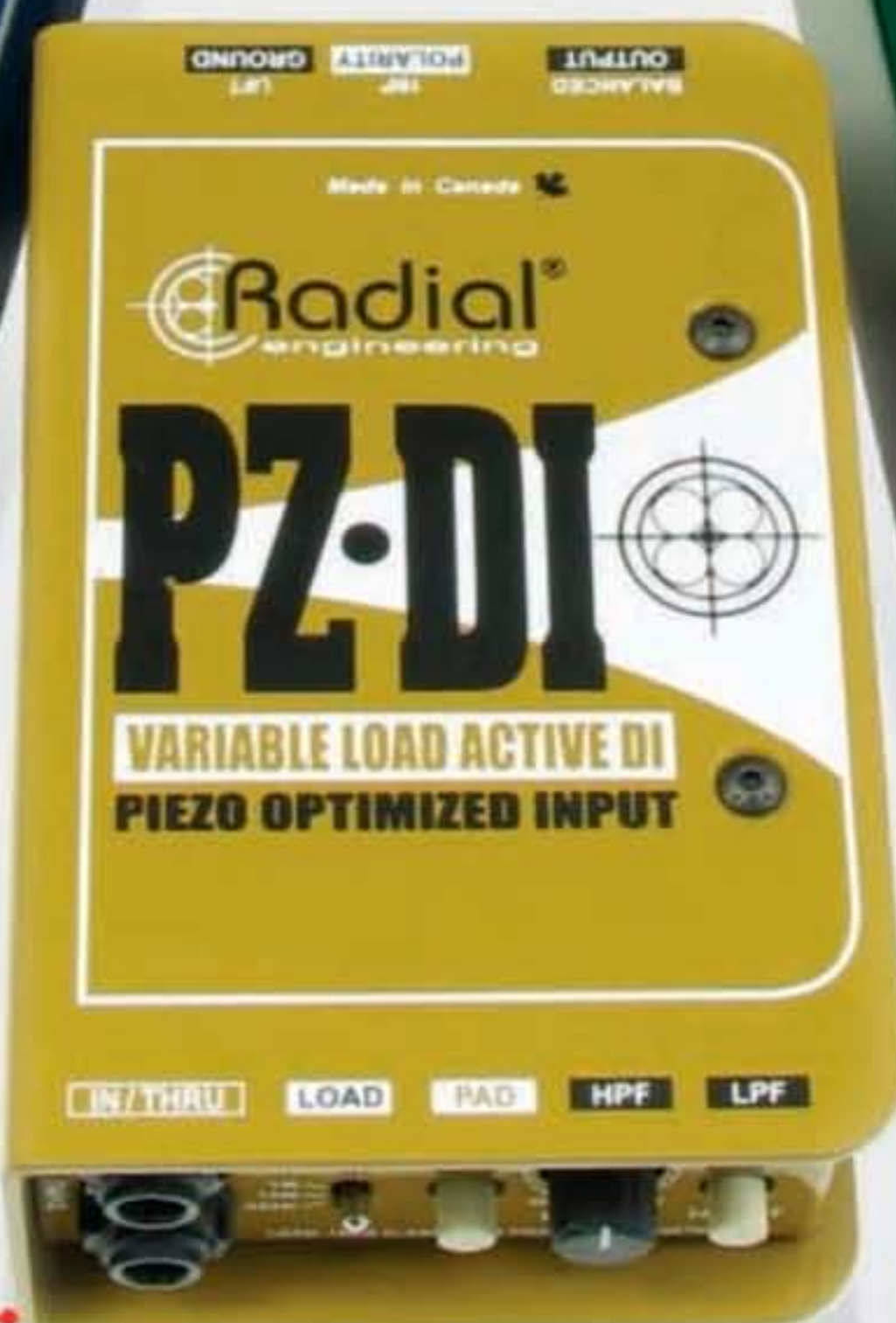


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“Tarde,” and the standard “For All We Know”—are all ballads, the last two without any solos.

“Norwegian Wood” is actually adapted from Bob Belden’s arrangement for Herbie Hancock [*The New Standard*, Verve, 1996], but without the modulations. “For All We Know” is based on Donny Hathaway’s version, which connected with me. It’s just me on bass and programmed keyboards; I state the melody and get out, which adds to the intimacy. Wayne Shorter’s version of “Tarde” with Milton [*Native Dancer*, Columbia, 1974] is another song I’ve felt connected with ever since I learned it while playing with Wayne in the ‘80s. We shared a bill in South America with Milton, and Wayne joined him on the song to recreate his famous solo, which was electrifying to see. That led me to play Wayne’s solo here as part of the melody, which felt more eloquent than taking a solo.

Can you offer any insight into interpreting vocal tunes on fretless?

For me, whenever I play any melody, I try to approach it like a vocalist and “sing” it. That’s the main reason I stay away from slides and heavy vibrato on fretless. I just don’t hear it, because it’s not something you do naturally with your voice. In truth, there’s a narrow amount of vocal music I like. I’ve always preferred instrumental music, because without lyrics the interpretation isn’t as defined. That said, it’s really all about what communicates to me, like Donny Hathaway’s performance on “For All We Know.” To get anywhere near his level of expression is my goal. The same with “Tarde.” I have no idea what the lyrics are saying, but Milton reaches me and inspires me to have something to say. Except in his case, I realized vocalists have the ability to sing a note and make it

become louder, which you can’t really do on fretless. So I shifted the tune to 3/4 to shorten the hanging vocal phrases, and it put a different spin on the song.

How did you first arrive at fretless and then discover it was your voice?

Around 1980, I was playing in jazz ensembles at North Texas State with my maple-neck P-Bass, and the sound wasn’t close to emulating an upright, which I’d been forced to study but realized wasn’t for me. I tried lowering the action to the point of buzzing, but that only got me strange looks. So I saved up and bought a ‘65 Jazz Bass to convert to fretless. Unable to find anyone to do the job, I did it myself choosing an epoxy and some HO-scale model-train wood for the fret slots. I played that and my fretted bass when I moved to L.A. a couple years later, and gradually, as I began turning down gigs that didn’t fit what I saw as my musical direction, the fretless came to the forefront. It’s a lot more expressive to me; things can happen after the initial attack, and there’s a bigger range of subtleties and drama that can be coaxed out of it compared to a fretted. During the period that I was moving toward fretless

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exclusively, I was learning more about the construction side of basses, which enabled me to go further down the path to getting my own sound.

Let's talk about Tribal Tech reforming to record *X*. What was the path that led you there?

After our last tour in 2000, which was the most fun we ever had, our label went out of business. I got married and moved to Spain and everyone fell

into their own projects, so there wasn't a sense of urgency to get back together, although discussions about doing a studio project continued. Finally the talks intensified, we came up with a budget, Shrapnel stepped in, and we were able to record for three days at Kinsey's studio in L.A. Now you can say we're all the way back, having booked a tour of Asia in March.

The CD sounds like a combination of the band's earlier writing-dominated days and later jam-for-material method.

We had the luxury of taking a lot more time after we jammed to compose and arrange where needed. We left "Corn Butter" pretty much as we played it in the studio, and we each took three of the remaining nine jams home with the responsibility of creating the arrangements, whether that meant editing out sections or adding new sections. My three were "Anthem," "Time Lapse," and "Let's Get Swung." For "Anthem" I pretty much wrote a whole new song around the one-chord guitar solo from the jam.

How did you get the upright sound on "Let's Get Swung," and what's the bass sound on "Ask Me a Question"?

"Swung" is the upright patch on my Roland VB-99, which I edited a bit; you can control body size and reverb in the body. That tune was pretty close to how we jammed it. Henderson improvised most of the melodies, but he didn't like the effects sound he had, so I went back and harmonized each note, almost like a sax-section soli in a big band. For "Ask," which was Kinsey's tune, Henderson broke out his sitar sound, so I was looking for something different. I used an Ibanez EWB205WNE 5-string acoustic bass guitar with the B and E strings tuned down to A and D, and I only played on those two strings.

How do you reflect on Tribal Tech 29 years later? Are you able to put it in context with other post-Bitches Brew bands?

I remember at our very first rehearsal, Henderson had a tune in E, which we might play on the Asia tour. I was new to L.A. and trying to be a chameleon, so I started slapping on it. After the song, Scott said, "You know, you don't have to do that." I knew instantly I was in the right place. We started out as a heavily-composed band so the music wouldn't depend on interaction, because we didn't have a regular working group; we were hiring musicians. Kirk and Kinsey joined for the fifth album, and we began the long journey to eventually not writing at all and just letting our personalities dictate what the music was. Looking back, we shut it down right before the internet and social media really took off. We might have been able to see it through and grow our audience if we had hung in a few more years and taken advantage, but we're back now.

As for our standing, it's not for me to say. I really appreciate those who hold us in high regard. I see that people play our music and learn their instruments

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and how to play together in a similar way as we do, so I suppose I can acknowledge that we've contributed to the language of the genre.

Similarly, having brought so much to the instrument, do you hear your influence in other bassists?

Listening specifically to other bass players is just not something I have the time or inclination to do;

my only real interest in the instrument is what I can say with it. However, as a teacher giving lessons, and through my webcasts and clinics, I'm aware that bassists want to know what I'm doing. The recognition aspect is very flattering, but it's not a topic I've ever been comfortable focusing on. What I am proud of is seeing how widely adapted the Ramp has become—especially because the initial reaction, even in BASS

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INFO



Retro [Abstract Logix, 2013]; Tribal Tech, *X* [Tone Center, 2012]; Triphasic,

Shaman [Universal Spain, 2009]; *Slaughterhouse, Vol. 3* [Abstract Logix, 2007]; *Actual Fiction* [Abstract Logix, 2007]

LISTEN

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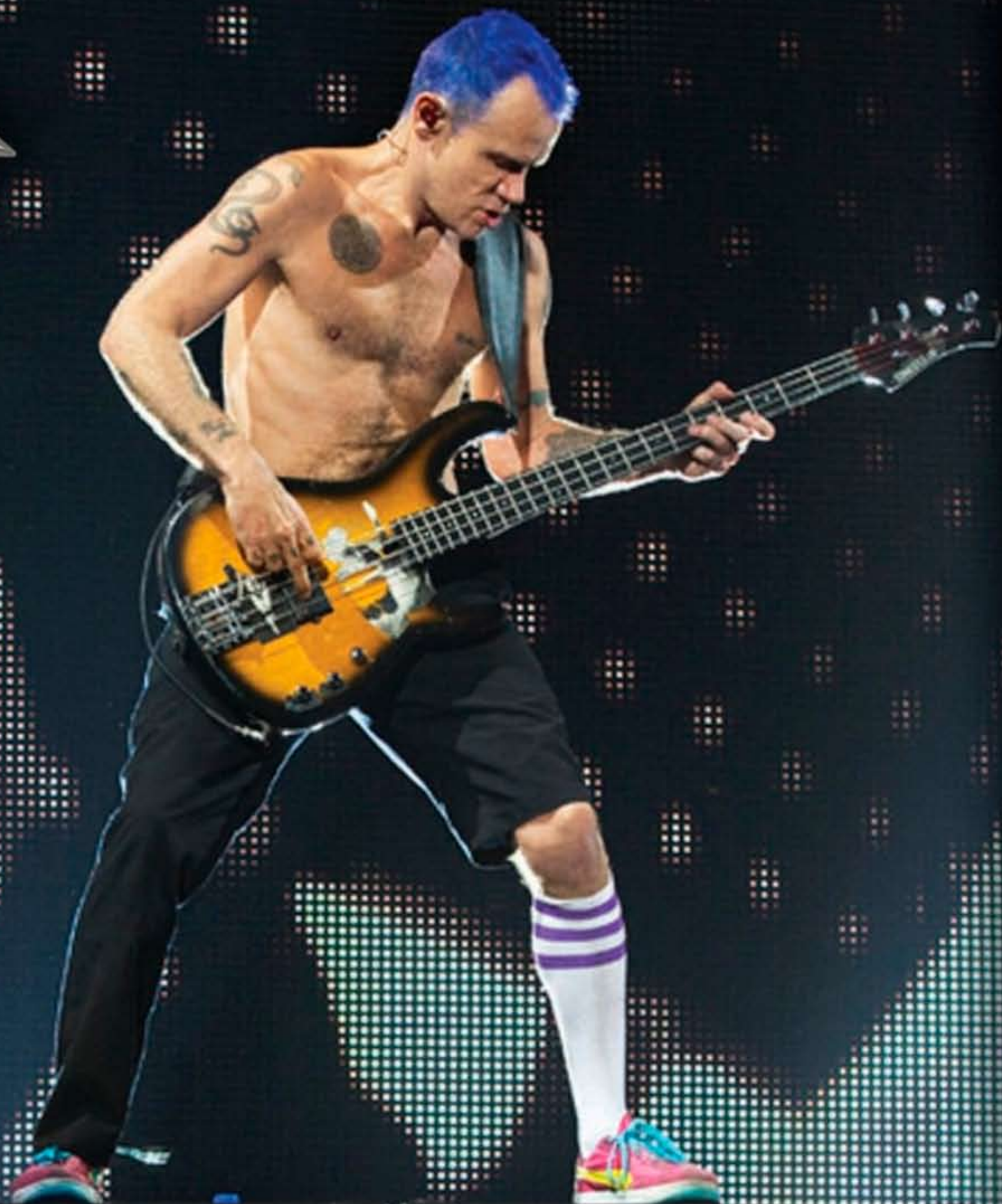
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- Visit Gary's website.
- Check out audio clips from *Retro*.
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PLAYER interviews, was people criticizing it and calling it a crutch.

You've always been outspoken about the music business and piracy.

You can find research to back up any opinion you want to adopt. Some surveys claim those who pirate spend more money on DVDs and CDs than those who don't. My approach is, when you make a CD, you have the initial responsibility to promote it—but then you have to let go of trying to control what happens to it, in a zen way. Otherwise you're asking for disappointment. Because it could go viral having nothing to do with your efforts, or it could suffer in anonymity without it being your fault, either. What has happened in the internet age is the public is inundated with mediocrity or

worse, as well as the occasional jewel, but how are you going to find it? If record labels did anything good, they were a filter, for better or worse, that protected the public from mediocrity. Now there's no filter. And it's a dilemma I'm faced with on the teaching side, as well. What can you tell a student who asks about making a career in the music business when it's so precarious right now?

You seem firmly settled in Europe.

I like the lifestyle here; jazz is considerably more accepted, and getting around is much easier, so people can go out and hear music or travel to take lessons. In the U.S. you're dealing with driving distances and drinking ages, plus jazz is just not part of the culture as it is here. Also, the reality of healthcare as a freelance musician in the

U.S. is that an illness or even an emergency room visit can bankrupt you. Here, for better or worse, I have the right to get sick without it destroying my financial well-being.

What's ahead for you?

Beyond the Tribal Tech Asia tour in March, we're checking out the possibility of Europe and U.S. shows. The Retro trio is looking at European dates this spring and possibly the U.S. in the fall. And I have a new duo recording project underway with Gergo that's more on the electronic, sequenced side. I feel fortunate to be able to do what I want musically, and to have found a balance between spending time working on my art and just being a normal person, which allows me to come back to music refreshed. **BP**

Retro Glide

On both *Retro* and *X*, Gary Willis and his fretless 5 are front and center in his familiar, fertile role as melody maker, groove improviser, and conversational soloist—X factor indeed. **Example 1** occurs at the 2:42 mark of "Change Agent" from *Retro*, during Gary's solo, halfway through four measures of *E♭m11*. It's at this point that he first locks in on a motif that bounces off the *E♭* tonic (bar 1 and beat one of bar 2) and then the *B♭* 5th (bar 2). From there, he continues to develop the idea over the ensuing four measures of *F♯m11*, initially pivoting off the 7th (*E*) and 4th (*B*) in bar 3, and then running a series of three-note ascending phrases consisting largely of 4ths for the next two measures (the open *G* in bar 5 was meant to be a ghost-note). He concludes in bar 6 by upping the intensity via sextuplets heavy on chromatics. Offers Willis, "I

look at music abstractly, like throwing colors on a canvas. Here I'm reacting to what I just played, and one idea shapes the next. I use 4ths frequently to create angularity, but you run out of room fast, so I switched to chromatics to maintain the energy."

Example 2 shows eight measures of the melody of "Amaryllis" (at 0:23), Gary's lyrical Oregon cover on *Retro*. He notes, "Paul McCandless played the melody on oboe, and it's a challenge to achieve that kind of sustain on bass. You need to pluck the strings with just the right intensity—not too hard or too soft—to get that envelope. Hand placement is also key; I plucked right before the fingerboard, if not over it."

Turning to *X*, **Ex. 3** starts 0:35 into "Got Faith 'N Phat," providing a snapshot

Ex. 1

Med. jazz,
swing feel

The musical notation for Example 1 is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 3, and the second system covers measures 4 through 6. The notation is written for a fretless 5-string bass. The first system is in the key of E♭m11, and the second system is in the key of F♯m11. The notation includes a staff with a treble clef and a staff with a bass clef. The tempo is marked as 112. The key signature is one flat. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

"CHANGE AGENT"
BY GARY WILLIS
USED BY PERMIS-
SION.

"GOT FAITH 'N
PHAT"
BY GARY WILLIS
USED BY PERMIS-
SION.

"WORKING BLUE"
BY GARY WILLIS
USED BY PERMIS-
SION.

"AMARYLLIS"
BY PAUL B MC
CANDLESS
USED BY PERMIS-
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Ex. 2

Med. ballad

♩ = 58

Am13/E

F#/E

D/E

1. Eb/E

D/E

2. E/D#

A/C#

E/C

Ex. 3

Med. funk

♩ = 96

Cm7

Bbm11

Ex. 4

Bright fusion

♩ = 148

Bbm11

of Gary's groove improvisation process. The pickup and bars 1 and 2 are essentially a long fill, leading into the verse at bar 3. There, Willis starts a groove based around the repetition of the C's in three different octaves—four if you count his high-C grabs in the last two bars. "By definition, grooving is repeating. So with a big enough groove vocabulary, you can react to and vary your own ideas in ways that avoid being predictable, while still repeating enough of the figures that make it sound like it's grooving. The larger your vocabulary, the more options you'll have. For me, this tune is an extreme example of not settling into a symmetric pattern while still repeating and developing ideas."

Finally, **Ex. 4** features a more static, repeated ostinato first heard at 2:04 of "Working Blue." Dig how Gary doesn't really arrive and sit on the tonic until beat four of bar 2. He relates, "This line happened in the jam and came to my hands quickly. I wanted a defined bass figure. Years of having to come up with bass lines enables me to imagine all sorts of variations over a one-chord vamp."



SOUNDRoom



Aria Pro II Cliff Burton Signature Bass

BY BRIAN FOX

THERE ARE THOSE ICONIC INSTRUMENTS—PAUL MCCARTNEY'S HÖFNER 500/1, CHRIS SQUIRE'S Rickenbacker 4001, Jaco Pastorius' "Bass of Doom," to name a few—that are so closely linked with that particular player that the mere sight of their silhouettes can give birth to "earworms" of the tastiest variety. If the vision of the new Aria Pro II Cliff Burton Signature Bass, modeled after the Metallica bassist's favored SB Black 'n' Gold I, doesn't immediately conjure the epic fade-in to "Orion" and the masterful melodic bass playing that follows, please you yourself a favor by immediately studying up on that most righteous instrumental track on Metallica's *Master of Puppets*. Got it? Moving on. . .

Tragically, just months after the release of *Master of Puppets*, Burton was killed in a rollover accident involving the band's tour bus in Europe. In his too-brief four years with Metallica, Burton elevated the role of the electric bass in heavy metal by artfully blending a nuanced understanding of harmonic function with a take-no-prisoners performance style that became legendary. To commemorate Cliff's contributions, Japan's Aria Guitars has, with the backing of both the Metallica machine and Cliff's father, Ray Burton, recreated the bass Burton swore by from 1984 to 1986. Though Aria has produced reissues loosely based on Cliff's SB Black 'n' Gold I, this is the truest reproduction to date.

RIDING THE LIGHTNING

Lifting the Cliff Burton Signature Bass out of its ostrich hardshell case (pretty sweet in its own right), the instrument's superb balance and excellent playability are immediately evident. The letters "SB" in this particular line of Arias stands for "Super Balanced," and rightfully so; the bass balances better than most both on a strap and in a lap. True to Cliff's preference, the Burton Signature comes strung with light-gauge Rotosound roundwounds that have a distinctive *clack* when hit hard. The smooth heel makes upper-register



access super easy, and the neck's width—1.57" at the brass nut—was a comfy compromise between thin J-style width and a wider P-style width.

With passive electronics and a single pickup, I didn't expect a whole lot in terms of versatility, but the Burton Signature's coil tap switch, which puts the pickup in either single-coil or humbucking mode, gave the bass two distinct voices. In single-coil mode, the bass has a sweet, well-balanced voice, and notes seem to retain most of their upper partials. For harder sounds, the humbucking mode had a hotter output and a heavier low-mid growl.

Playing through select overdrive and distortion pedals revealed that the pickup was

microphonic; a tap on the back of the bass sent signal to the amp, and high-volume playing with distortion produced a pretty gnarly feedback howl. In the right settings, that might be more of a feature than a bug, but if it were my axe, I'd have a tech wax-pot the pickup to eliminate the microphonics.

Sadly, my time with the Cliff Burton Signature Bass was cut short; it was merely stopping over on its way to the studio of some guy named Robert Trujillo. But judging by first impressions, the Burton Signature has a lot of things going for it, the official blessing by Cliff's dad among them. **BP**



S SPECIFICATIONS

CLIFF BURTON SIGNATURE BASS
Street \$6,000

Pros Superb balance; excellent playability; coil-tap switch offers two distinct voices.

Cons A microphonic pickup made the bass prone to feedback, especially when using distortion.

Bottom Line This spot-on reproduction of the bass Burton favored in his later years is a worthy investment for well-heeled heshers who want a piece of Cliff's legacy.

Contact Audio Images, (415) 957-9131

ARIA PRO II

SPECS

Construction Neck-through
Body wings Alder
Neck 7-ply maple and walnut
Fingerboard Rosewood
Pickup Aria MB-V
Controls Volume, tone, coil tap
Tuners Gold-plated brass
Nut Brass
Width at nut 1.57"
Bridge Brass with gold-plated saddles
Frets 24
Strings Rotosound RS66LB
Hardshell case Included
Made in Japan



MXR

Bass Chorus Deluxe & Bass Overdrive

BY BRIAN FOX

THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF NOISE—FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD—IN THE world of effect pedals, with announcements of “better-mousetrap” stompboxes coming fast and furious. Over the past few years, we’ve learned if that racket is coming from MXR Bass Innovations, the booty-loving branch of pedal pushers at Dunlop Manufacturing, it’s worth a listen. Since 1972, MXR has been an industry leader in the effects market, with iconic boxes like the Phase 90 and the Dyna Comp earning spaces on the pedalboards of pros. In recent years, the Bass Innovations subdivision has caught our ear with their fab Bass Fuzz Deluxe, cool Bass Compressor, funky-fresh Bass Envelope Filter, bitchin’ Blow Torch Distortion ... the list goes on. This month we turn to two new additions to the worthy line, the Bass Chorus Deluxe and the Bass Overdrive.

TAKE IT TO THE ... CHORUS

Utilizing analog bucket-brigade technology—in which the signal runs through a series of capacitors to create an organic, warm-sounding effect—the Bass Chorus Deluxe offers some key features that set it apart from most other boxes in its class. In addition to BASS and TREBLE EQ controls—voiced

S SPECIFICATIONS

BASS CHORUS DELUXE

Street \$170

Pros Remarkably versatile, yet easy to use.

Cons None

Bottom Line The Bass Chorus Deluxe’s fundamental-defending x-OVER and double-duty FLANGER features make it a top choice in bass modulation effects.

BASS OVERDRIVE

Street \$130

Pros The Bass Overdrive’s CLEAN control goes a long way in preserving ever-important fundamental.

Cons None

Bottom Line More refined than a fuzz and more booty-saving than many distortion pedals, the Bass Overdrive is a good choice for those craving a tube-like overdrive.

Contact jimdunlop.com

BASS CHORUS DELUXE

Controls INTENSITY, RATE, WIDTH, BASS, TREBLE

Buttons x-OVER, FLANGER

Power source 9V AC or battery

Switching True bypass

Made in U.S.A.

BASS OVERDRIVE

Controls TONE, DRIVE, CLEAN, VOLUME

Power source 9V AC or battery

Switching True bypass

Made in U.S.A.

MXR

SPECS



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specifically for bass—and the self-evident INTENSITY, RATE, and WIDTH controls, this slick stompbox has a built-in crossover that essentially acts like a low-pass filter, allowing low notes to flow un-effected, while the chorus or flanger effect targets notes on the A string and higher (technically, modulation is attenuated for frequencies at 100Hz and below). It's an elegant approach to dodge the queasy, seasick warble you can get when playing low with a chorus engaged. The Bass Chorus Deluxe also features a Stereo Hardwire Bypass Mode—accessed with a switch mounted on the circuit board—that allows you to split the effect signal via a TRS to TS cable adapter so you can send to two different amplifiers for a true stereo effect. Sweet.

For its part, the chorus effect itself was pretty righteous; the controls were voiced in a way that it was actually hard to get a truly awful sound out of the pedal (no small feat in a chorus pedal), and the pedal gives you ultimate control over depth and intensity of the effect. For my tastes, the pedal's flanger setting, engaged by depressing the top-mounted FLANGER button, is where it's at; the

swirling, psychedelic churn it spits out is fun as H-E-double-hockey-sticks, and paired with a fuzz, it's freaking sublime.

OPERATION OVERDRIVE

One of the features we dug the most about MXR's Bass Fuzz Deluxe was its dual DRY and WET controls, which created the sensation that you were blending the signals of two distinct amps—one clean, and one dirty. With the Bass Overdrive, MXR has honed that concept in a clever way. Recognizing that it doesn't necessarily sound optimal if you pair a pristine, un-effected signal with a dirty signal, they have equipped the CLEAN control with a pre-set EQ curve to bring out the best in the clean signal. Along with its straight-up TONE, DRIVE, and VOLUME controls, the Bass Overdrive is a powerful tone-sculpting tool that simulates a multi-rig setup in a tiny stompbox.

For their ease of use, depth of features, and bottom-friendly, fundamental-friendly disposition, the Bass Chorus Deluxe and Bass Overdrive both earn a BASS PLAYER Editor Award. **BP**



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GHS 3060



LA BELLA 750T

Tale Of The Tapewound

GHS 3060 Tapewound Black Nylon & La Bella 750T White Nylon Tape Wound Strings

BY BRIAN FOX

EVEN THOUGH BASS PLAYERS TEND TO BE MORE PROGRES-sive than our thin-stringed brethren when it comes to gear tech, there are plenty of us who are precious about the gear we hear on classic rock and R&B records. Whether it's to cop Paul McCartney's semi-hollow *woof* or James Jamerson's P-Bass *thump*, tapewound strings have long been a go-to for electric bass players longing for a more woody, upright-like tone. Lucky for those of us with a hankering for that thick, meaty tone, a growing number of manufacturers now

S SPECIFICATIONS

GHS	GHS 3060 TAPEWOUND BLACK NYLON STRINGS Street \$30 Pros All the booty, half the effort. Cons None Bottom Line Nothing quite cops the <i>clack</i> of a gut-strung doghouse slapped spitless, but GHS Tapewounds can get doggone close. Contact ghsstrings.com
	LA BELLA 750T WHITE NYLON TAPE WOUND Street \$40 Pros Trad-style tapewound bottom with a bite. Cons None Bottom Line Like a healthy dose of "white lightning," La Bella's 750T add some zing to the tapewound thing. Contact labella.com
SPECS	GHS 3060 Construction Stainless steel core with black nylon wrap Gauges .050, .070, .090, .105
	LA BELLA 750T Construction Stainless steel core with transparent nylon wrap Gauges .050, .065, .085, .105



A photograph of Darryl Jones performing on stage. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and is playing a white electric bass guitar. To his left is a large black floor monitor and a microphone stand. The background is dark with some stage lighting effects.

Darryl Jones Loves Killer Tone

The Darryl Jones Signature Bases

This is the fix for your tone jones. If you know Darryl's discography, then you know he's played with some heavyweights...Miles Davis, Sting, Madonna, The Rolling Stones...

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offer nylon, or “tapewound” strings. This month, we look at two options, the trad-style GHS 3060 set, and the new La Bella 750T set. For testing purposes, we strung each set on nearly identical Fender Precision Basses.

CLACK ATTACK

Though they are gauged thicker than most conventional roundwounds, the .050–.105 GHS 3060 strings have a surprisingly supple, flexible feel. All string sets take on a different character depending on your playing style, but the 3060s felt especially responsive; digging in with a heavy right-hand attack gave that fingerboard *clack* so characteristic of slapstyle upright bass playing, while easing back with a lighter plucking approach brought out the big bottom that make flats so appealing. Compared to other tapewound strings I’ve played, the 3060s felt particularly pliable. Deep, bluesy, Geezer-like bends felt unforced, and more delicate, palm-muted styles felt downright effortless.

BRIGHT WHITES

Aiming for that trad-approved flat feel with a bit more bite,

longtime tapewound champs La Bella have introduced the 750T string set, which sports a stainless steel core with a transparent (read: “white”) nylon wrap. The 750T set feels much like any other tapewound string at first flick, but it has a noticeably brighter character. Tension on the La Bella set felt higher than the GHS, but not to the degree that it made playing measurably more difficult. Owing to the string’s nylon coating (and lack of outer metal wrap), the 750Ts are virtually noise-less when sliding up and down the neck.

Like straps, picks, and so much other electric bass accoutrement, strings are such that they’re near impossible to truly compare. To be sure, the GHS and La Bella sets offer two different takes on tapewounds. For those looking for pliability and trad-style tapewound vibe, the GHS 3060s are a good bet. For those seeking a fresh take on tapewounds, the tighter, brighter La Bella 750Ts are a refreshing take on the tapewound. The beauty of strings is that they’re affordable enough that you can experiment without blowing your bass budget. If you’re looking for old school tone, these are two worthy avenues. Now go see for yourself! **BP**

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WOODSHED

JAZZ CONCEPTS

Eddie Safranski

Jazz Famous! No. 1 In The Polls!

BY JOHN GOLDSBY



WHO'S THE MOST FAMOUS BASS PLAYER OF ALL TIME?

Got your answer? Here's your challenge: Ask every non-musician you run into if they've heard of your famous bass player. Don't ask your musician friends—they're in the business, and they probably know the same players that you like. Ask the cashier at the gas station, the school nurse, the bank teller, your girlfriend's dad—anyone who is not a musician for fun or profit. Unless you named Paul McCartney or Sting, I'll bet almost none of them had heard of your famous bassist. If they're really out of the loop, they might not even know Mr. McCartney or Sting are bass players.

Let's face it—even our biggest, larger-than-life bass heroes are not really famous compared to the likes of Elvis, Mick, or Beyoncé. Geniuses like James Jamerson and Jaco Pastorius were game changers for bass players, but not famous to the general public. The expression *famous bassist* is worthy of George Carlin's list of oxymorons, right next to jumbo shrimp, soft rock, and tax relief. In the jazz world, when a player makes the top of the polls, we say he or she has become jazz famous—they're well known to the one percent of music fans who prefer jazz. Think of the even smaller percentage of those folks who are bass fans, and the numbers are humbling.

Eddie Safranski was a huge bass star of the '40s and '50s. He topped the bass categories of *Metronome* magazine's Readers Poll from 1946–53, and the *Downbeat* Readers Poll from 1946–52. He was the No. 1 bassist in the polls for all of those years. He was jazz famous!

Safranski came to prominence as a featured soloist with the Stan Kenton Orchestra from 1945–48; he developed the innovations introduced by Jimmie Blanton a few years earlier (see February '13), taking Blanton's groundbreaking technique to the next level. Safranski possessed great technique: fast walking lines, strong arco skills, spot-on intonation, and an advanced command of the swing and bebop languages. The gig with Kenton put him on the bass map, and he was often featured as a soloist in front of the band, standing directly beside bandleader/pianist Kenton.

Safranski is best known for his bass feature, "Safranski: Artistry in Bass" [Stan Kenton, *Artistry in Rhythm*, Capitol], written by Kenton's arranger, Peter Rugulo. The track starts with a Kenton trademark: screaming horns. Safranski enters with a classical-sounding bowed statement, followed by a fast walking line accompanied only by Kenton on piano. The middle section is a medium-tempo swinging bass solo, reminiscent of Blanton's "Jack the Bear" (see March '13). The fast walking section returns, followed by a great moment in jazz: the horns move through four sustained chords while Safranski plays all over the bass (**Ex. 1**). This is an early example of orchestral big band writing in support of a bass solo. Safranski ends his feature with "Jack the Bear"-style lines, athletically springing up and down the instrument.

i INFO

Visit John on the web at johngoldsbys.com for sound samples, videos, and answers to all of your bass-related questions.

JOHN GOLDSBY

CONNECT

- Watch Safranski's showboating right-hand technique with the powerful Stan Kenton Orchestra.
- Check out the burning version of composer George Russell's "Concerto for Billy the Kid" from *The Subject Is Jazz*, a 1958 TV show featuring Russell, Safranski, pianist Billy Taylor, pianist Bill Evans, and many others.
- Read about Safranski's career (with videos) in the article "Eddie Safranski: Pittsburgh Jazz Legend." bassplayer.com/april2013



Safranski's many skills were helped to the forefront by two technological innovations of the '40s: an upright bass pickup, and the Michaels-Hull Electronic Labs amplifier. In 1946, Safranski signed on with Michaels-Hull to promote their amp and bass pickup, which was mounted on the endpin, or *end peg*, of the bass. The device was called the "Amplified Peg," which later became the company name Ampeg.

In the book *Ampeg: The Story Behind the Sound* [Hal Leonard], authors Gregg Hopkins and Bill Moore write, "Safranski, who received a royalty for every peg and bass amp sold, was responsible for personally introducing many New York bassists to the Michaels-Hull—and later the Ampeg—sound, particularly after he became chief bass player for the NBC studio orchestra." The newfangled amplified bass system probably helped Safranski develop

his fleet technique and allowed him to play somewhat lighter and faster than many of his contemporaries. The Kenton band was loud, powerful, and brassy, but Safranski can still be heard quite well on the old recordings.

In his book *Rhythm Man: Fifty Years in Jazz* [University of Michigan Press], Kenton guitarist Steve Jordan writes, "Safranski had a small amp beside him and behind me. I was on a riser one step lower than Safranski, and his amp was right by my ear until he agreed to move it to his other side so that I wouldn't get all that constant electronic buzzing and humming. Safranski had another amp beside the trumpets because the trumpet players and trombone players on the end were so far away from Shelly Manne and Safranski that they couldn't hear either the bass or drums." Safranski was apparently using two bass amps, one as a

monitor for the horns on the far side of the bandstand, and one for himself.

After leaving Kenton, Safranski moved among the best jazz ensembles of the day and worked with top jazz players like Charlie Barnet, Marian McPartland, and Johnny Smith. In the early '50s, he settled into studio work in New York as a staff musician at NBC, where he remained until the late '60s. He passed away on January 10, 1974, at age 55.

Eddie Safranski paved a path for the rest of us by using cutting-edge equipment and technology to showcase his stunning technique and musicality. He probably gets less notice as a jazz player than he deserves because he took himself out of the jazz scene at the peak of his bass-playing powers and chose to embed himself in the comfortable world of the New York studios. Nevertheless, he was an enormously famous bass player—jazz famous. **BP**

EX. 1

Rubato
♩ = 120

1 C7
Horns
accel. rit.
3 2 5 3 7 6 5 7 9 12 12 11 12 14 15 14 12 9 5 5 2 3 3 3

2 F7
Horns
accel. rit.
3 2 5 8 10 10 9 10 12 14 14 12 14 15 17 14 15 12 14 2 3 5 3 3 3 1

3 B $\flat$ 7
Horns
rit.
5 3 3 3 7 10 10 9 10 12 13 13 12 13 14 15 2 3 7 10 3 3 3

4 E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7
Horns
rit.
1 8 13 1 8 1 1 3 4 4 4



BLUES YOU CAN USE

Jerry Jemmott

The Groovemaster

BY ED FRIEDLAND



LAST MONTH I HAD THE HONOR AND PLEASURE

of reconnecting with one of my musical heroes: Jerry Jemmott, the Groovemaster. Born in 1946 in New York City, Jemmott was gigging on upright bass by age 12, and went on to play with Mercer Ellington's band as a seasoned 16-year-old. While playing double bills with popular electrified R&B groups, he noticed, "The cats playing jazz were very much into themselves, and that turned me off. It seemed to me the people playing electric bass were playing music for people, not just themselves." He soon switched to electric bass, and by 1967, was offered Chuck Rainey's former slot in the King Curtis band. His innovative approach is well represented on the seminal *King Curtis Live at the Fillmore West* [1971], as well as the studio session *Everybody's Talking* [1972].

Jemmott's style descends directly from the James Jamerson school, but his nimble lines, crystal-clear articulation, and bouncy feel on the Fender Jazz Bass created a new lineage. It was Jemmott's playing on tracks like "Hideaway," from *Fred- die King Is a Blues Master* [1969], and "You're Losin' Me," on B.B. King's classic *Completely Well* [1969], that fueled the funk in a young Jaco Pastorius. Check out the Florida Flash's hall- mark groove on "Come On, Come Over"—you can hear the Jemmott influence on display, loud and proud. Jemmott's impressive track resumé includes Aretha Franklin's "Think," "Eleanor Rigby," and "The Weight"; B.B. King's "The Thrill Is Gone"; the Rascals' "People Got to Be Free"; George Benson's "Come Together" and "I Want You (She's So Heavy)"; and Gil Scott Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," among

EX. 1

♩ = 123

E7

5

A7 (Simile)

E7

9

B7

A7

E7

A close-up photograph of Victor Wooten, a Black man with dreadlocks, playing a double bass. He is wearing a dark shirt and has a focused expression. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some stage equipment.

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SUMMER PROGRAMS



others. For the past six years, Jerry has been touring with the Gregg Allman band, and witnessed at a recent gig in Austin, Texas, the Groovemaster is still showing us how it's done.

During the late '60s, many of the electric blues pioneers found a new audience with rock & roll fans, and funkier strains of the blues emerged. **Example 1** is a classic Jemmott approach to Freddie King's funky version of "Hideaway." Jerry performs the repetitive, syncopated 16th-note line with trademark fire and clarity. The dead notes and accents are important to the line's sense of propulsion—in particular, the syncopated figure on beats *three* and *four*. Broadening the "and" of *four* nicely sets up the next downbeat. The 1-8-♭7-6-5 melodic pattern is one Jerry used on many tracks, always with a signature twist. The turn-around bar (bar 12) features another staple R&B figure, the chromatic walkup from the 3rd of the chord to the 5th. Jerry intersperses percussive dead notes on the same string between the notes of the line to create a feeling of topspin at this already burning tempo.

Check into the recorded works of this founding father of bass, and if the Gregg Allman band is playing near you, take the opportunity to witness a living legend playing his butt off. You can stay in touch with Jerry's activities at jerryjemmott.com, and read more detailed information about his history, equipment, and playing style in my book *The R&B Bass Masters: The Way They Play* [Backbeat, 2005]. **BP**



i INFO

ED FRIEDLAND

Ed "the Bass Whisperer" Friedland plays, writes, and teaches out of his bass base in Austin, Texas. Dig deeper into his analysis of Jemmott, Jamerson, Dunn, Rainey, and more in *The R&B Bass Masters*.
edfriedland.com



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Bass Works



TRANSCRIPTION

Neon Knights: Paul Gilbert, Juan Alderete, and Bruce Bouillet, shred-ready in 1987.



“Scarified” By Racer X

Juan Alderete’s Complete Bass Line

BY BRIAN FOX

PHOTOGRAPH BY NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS

WHETHER IT’S HIS PROG-APPROVED PRECISION PLUCKING WITH THE MARS

Volta, his Karn-esque fretless warble with Big Sir, his demented distorto-tones with Vato Negro, or his tweaker-pleasing knob twiddling on pedalsandeffects.com, you better believe that Juan Alderete is playing from the heart. It takes mad skills to navigate the choppy waters of the vast soundscape Alderete occupies. For Juan, that dexterity was largely developed in the rehearsal halls of Los Angeles’ Musicians Institute.

To most in the 1980s heavy metal set, Eddie Van Halen was the undisputed king of the electric guitar. At MI, players like Juan and his Racer X bandmates Paul Gilbert and Bruce Bouillet tapped into Eddie’s licks and tricks in an attempt to achieve ultimate fingerboard mastery. Along with singer Jeff Martin and drummer Scott Travis, Gilbert, Alderete, and Bouillet hit new heights with *Second Heat*, the band’s 1987 release. On the instrumental track “Scarified,” the team take turns demonstrating their technical know-how.

In between recording sessions with Mars Volta frontman Cedric Bixler-Zavala, Juan took a moment to take BP back to the heyday of shred.

i INFO

Racer X, *Second Heat* [Shrapnel, 1987]

LISTEN



CONNECT

- Watch Juan and Racer X tear through “Scarified” live in Oakland in 1988.



What kind of work did it take to master a tune as challenging as “Scarified?”

When Racer X did our first record [*Street Lethal*, 1986], we were still studying at Musicians Institute. But by the time we did “Scarified,” we were all working jobs. Paul was working the graveyard shift at a hotel, so he could sit there with a guitar and watch the door. I got a job at a hot dog stand in Marina del Rey. I would set up at around 10 AM, but nobody would come until around noon. So I would just sit there for two hours practicing “Scarified.” After the lunch rush, I would practice some more. Girls would roll up because they saw a longhaired dude with an instrument, and I’d be like, “What’s up, ladies?” [*Laughs.*]

Back then, it was all about optimizing your practice time. Paul had that part of it *down*. We’d be at MI to practice at 6 AM, because the big rehearsal studio was first-come, first-served. We’d be there all day long, just shredding. We thought that was what was going to make us millionaires. It didn’t, but whatever!

How did the main riff for “Scarified” come about?

Paul and Scott would often rehearse on their own. Scott was always playing that rhythmic pattern [in bars 5–6], so Paul wrote the riff to match.

How did you record *Second Heat*?

We had a budget of around \$10,000, so we went up to [Northern California’s] Prairie Sun Studios to do pre-production with Steve Fontano and [Shrapnel Records founder] Mike Varney. When we went to record it, we did essentially three days of drums, three hours of bass, and then two weeks of vocal and guitar overdubs. I would

always complain that I’d just get a couple hours while the other guys had days and weeks! But I’d sit through it all, because I was into it—I was obsessed with being a musician.

How much time did you have to track “Scarified?”

I didn’t get all of my solo bits in one take, but the actual song—with the exception of an ascending part that I played with a pick [bars 13–14] was pretty much done in one take. Varney would try to rush us through everything to keep us on budget. It could be a stressful situation, but then again, if you’re a shredder, you’ve practiced your ass off. I was doing 14 hours of practice per day back then, so when I went into the studio, I was very prepared.

What gear did you record with?

The bass was a Squire Jazz Bass from the ’80s. I bought at Guitar Center for \$300, and I still have it. For an amp, I used whatever they had there. I think it was an Ampeg, either a B-15 or an SVT.

With riffs at this speed, fingering is crucial.

Paul and I would sit together and work it out. He’d say things like, “Why don’t you play it like this? I think it would be cleaner.” For fingering the main riff, it’s almost always three notes per string. Any time I’ve seen kids play the riff on YouTube, they’re always playing with the wrong fingering. I think they’d have a better chance at accomplishing the performance if they use the fingering we did. People think it’s really difficult, but since it’s purely diatonic, the fingering is actually not that hard. My hands aren’t that big, but my left hand is hypermobile, so I could match Paul’s guitar parts pretty well. It’s hard as hell for me to do it now, but back then it was nothing.

What did you draw on for inspiration for your two bass breaks, at bars 15 and 47?

Back then I was really into Stanley Clarke. I remember an interview where he was talking about phrases of five or seven notes over one [beat]. I wanted to do as much of that as I could. When I played the lick at the end of the second bass break [bar 48], Paul and I couldn’t stop laughing, because we couldn’t believe I pulled it off!

I didn’t know exactly what I was going to play on that second bass break, but I spent hours and hours working on arpeggio sweeps, because that was so “in” back then. Even in the bass solos I would play at Racer X shows, I’d just play as fast as I could.

What can you offer about the two-hand tapping part in bars 35–36?

Paul could have played that part easily—he was the guy obsessed with Billy Sheehan. But he really wanted Bruce and me to play it, because there was already such a spotlight on Paul and Scott.

Is there anything else you’d care to point out?

The octave parts at the end [bars 82–83] is me trying to sound like Jeff Berlin [*laughs*]. He would always just *burn*. Nobody matches his dedication to note definition. **BP**

“Scarified” by Racer X

Transcription by Brian Fox

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2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 5 7 4 2 | 2 5 7 9 5 7 9 6 7 9 6 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 5 7 4 2 | 2 12 9 11 12 9 11 12 9

45

E D D#m7b5 E Fdim

3 6 6

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 | 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 | 12 14 11 12 14 11 13 14 13 11(11) 14 12 11 14 12 16 14 14

48

Bm E

3 3

11 12 14 11 12 14 11 14 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

52

A D G#m7b5 C#5

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

56

D#5

4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 | 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 | 6 7 3 4

♩ = 73

60

F E G#m

2 2 2 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 4 4 4 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

64

E

2 2 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 6 7 5 6 8 9 6 9 8 9 8 6 9 6 9 8 6 9 8 5 | 4 4 0 2 4 4 2 4 2 4 4 4 2 4 4 4

67 $\text{♩} = 146$

70

74 **G** F#m

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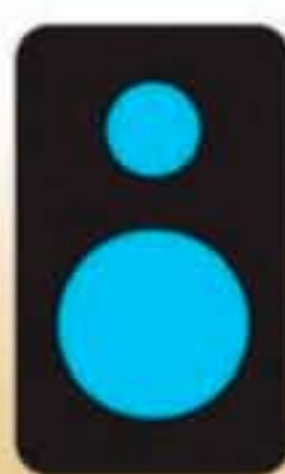
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Over the past 20-plus years with *BASS PLAYER*, Art Director and photographer Paul Haggard has accumulated a shelf full of broken cameras and some dusty memories. He will recount some over the next few columns until either he can't remember any more, or they fail to be interesting—whichever comes first.

OUTTAKES

Photograph from October 1997

SOMETIMES, A GOOD IDEA CAN BE BORN FROM MYRIAD sources of intense complexity, incorporating grandiose depth and breadth of insight and thought. Such are the most magnificent endeavors of man: the construction of the Parthenon, the Apollo space program, and mapping the sequence of the human genome, to name but a few. And other times great ideas can come directly from the most pure, abject stupidity. I can say with only the tiniest degree of reluctance that more of my ideas originate from the latter than the former.

I am what most would label a shallow dimwit at my very best moments, but occasionally I can produce what I describe as unmitigated conceptual genius. This was precisely the case on the day of the cover photo session of



the bassist for the band 311. As Editor Karl Coryat and I rolled through Hollywood, arguing intellectually at length—as we usually did in those days—the finer points of the previous night's David Letterman monologue, we were forced to abruptly abort our conversation as the realization fell upon us that we were about a half-mile from the shoot location and I had absolutely no idea what I would do with this man's portrait to make it remotely compelling.

I mused, and ruminated, and contemplated, and reflected from within for what seemed like an entire minute, and then began to brainstorm out loud.

"Let's see, shooting a *bassist*. Okay. His name is *P-Nut*. Hmm. P-Nut. P-Nut. Hmmm."

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